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**Bhakti-Rasāyana**  
**The Nectar-Tonic of Pure Devotion**

Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja

### Introduction

At the beginning of the second part of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, Jaimini Ṛṣi explains to Janamejaya how after having heard the description of Nārada's quest which comprises the first part of this exalted scripture, Parīkṣit Mahārāja's mother Uttarā said to her son, "My heart cannot be satisfied if those devotees who, being indifferent to any other sādhana and sādhyā, desire only rādhā-dāsyā, and who perpetually sing Her nāma-saṅkīrtana and are immersed in prema for Her, attain residence in merely the same Vaikuṇṭha as so many other devotees do. This is a matter of great sorrow! And I cannot tolerate that this may be the final destination for devotees like Śrī Nandarāya and Śrī Yaśodā. There must certainly be a suitable abode for them which is superior to Vaikuṇṭha. If there is such a place, then please describe it and deliver me from this doubt." (Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.1.21-22, 24)

Parīkṣit Mahārāja replied, "Although I could satisfy you by answering your question with the words of the śruti and smṛti, instead by the mercy of my guru, Śrī Śukadeva, I will first relate a historical narration which will dispel all of your doubts. Then I will speak those essential verses of the scriptures." (Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.1.34-35)

Then after hearing the incomparable story of Gopa-kumāra which comprises the second part of the Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, Janamejaya said to Jaimini Ṛṣi, "Fearing that these descriptions will now come to an end, my heart is feeling great sorrow. Therefore now please give me such potent

nectar by hearing which my heart will be fully purified for all time.” (Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.89)

Jaimini replied, “O my child Janamejaya! Your father, Śrī Parīkṣit, feeling transcendental pleasure upon describing the glories of Goloka, next sang with wonderful and sweet bhāva numerous ślokaś from two great epics which are the very essence of the śrutis and smṛtis. With great happiness I wander in this world singing these verses, thereby mitigating the pangs of separation from your father which I feel.” (Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.90-91)

Then Jaimini Ṛṣi went on to quote four verses from the Brahma-saṁhitā and fifty-nine verses from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam which collectively have come to be known as “bhakti-rasāyana”, nectar-tonic which stimulates kṛṣṇa-bhakti. This present volume of lectures which Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja spoke originally in Hindi comprises his commentary on twenty-eight of these verses which are the very essence of the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. In gradation these verses glorify the devotion of the different classes of devotees in Vraja, culminating in the superlative bhakti of the vraja-gopīs.

I would like to express my gratitude to Śrīmatī Āśā Nārāyaṇa (M.A. in Sanskrit) for assisting with the translation from Hindi, to Śrīmān Ālwārnātha dāsa Vanacārī for his editing of this material, and to Śrīmatī Yaśodā-gopī-devī dāsī for proofreading the book and contributing the funds which covered all the prepress expenses. Finally I offer praṇāma time and again unto the lotus feet of the foremost of rasika Vaiṣṇavas, Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, who has given us such wonderful explanations of the nectar-tonic which Parīkṣit Mahārāja gave to Uttarā, Jaimini Ṛṣi gave to Janamejaya, and Sanātana Gosvāmī gave to the inhabitants of this world.

Vaiṣṇava dāsānudāsa,

Premā-vilāsa dāsa

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Completed on September 12, 1994, the anniversary of the appearance of our svāminī, Śrīmatī Rādhikā.

Śrīla Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja's praṇāma-mantra

Composed by Śrīmān Navīna-kṛṣṇa dāsa Brahmācārī

tridaṇḍīnām bhakta-śiromaṇim ca śrī-kṛṣṇa-padābja dhṛtaika-hṛdi caitanya-  
līlāmṛta-sāra sāraṁ nārāyaṇaṁ tvam satataṁ prapadye

I offer repeated praṇāma unto Śrī Śrīmad Bhaktivedānta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja who is the crown-jewel of devotees among tridaṇḍi-sannyāsīs, and who always keeps in his heart the lotus feet of Śrī (Śrīmatī Rādhikā) and Kṛṣṇa. He especially keeps in his heart the very essence of the nectarine truths for which Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu enacted His pastimes.

Śrī Śrī Guru-Gaurāṅgau Jayataḥ

## Chapter One

### The Earth Becomes Fortunate

In the final chapter of Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, after the story of Gopakumāra has been completed, Sanātana Gosvāmī has quoted verses from the Tenth Canto of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam which Parīkṣit Mahārāja spoke to his mother Uttarā. They are verses of very beautiful poetry which stimulate the sentiment of bhakti. Stringing these verses together Sanātana Gosvāmī has composed a necklace for the benefit of the sādhakas of this world, and when sādhakas keep these verses in their hearts, it is as if they are wearing this necklace around their necks. And if while taking harināma they sometimes call out these verses, it will increase the ānanda in their chanting. This

compilation of verses is known as bhakti-rasāyana, or the nectar-tonic of bhakti-rasa. When the material body becomes weakened by illness and one is unable to eat anything, by drinking some tonic the digestion and the pulse again become strong. Similarly, in the realm of bhakti, for those in whom intense hankering for rāgānugā-bhakti has arisen, the verses in this final chapter are like nectar-tonic. In the bhāva of Kamala-maṣjārī, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura prayed:

*nāhaṁ vande tava caraṇayor-dvandvam advanda hetoḥ kumbhīpākaṁ  
gurum api hare nārakaṁ nāpanetūṁ ramyā-rāmā-mṛdūtanūlatā nandane  
nābhirastuṁ bhāve bhāve hṛdaya-bhavane bhāvayem bhavantam*

“Prabhu, I am not performing bhajana so that You will remove the worldly misery which is strangling me. I am not praying at Your feet for entrance into the heavenly garden of Nandana-kānana where one can enjoy with beautiful women for a very long time, nor am I praying for liberation so that I will never again have to suffer for nine months in the womb of a mother and never again be punished by the messengers of Yamarāja. I pray that in the core of my heart You will increase the bhāva of Vṛndāvana, where You are roaming with the gopīs and enjoying amorous pastimes. In meditation on the descriptions of these pastimes, I will at once become completely lost in prema - this is what I am praying for. I am praying that I may take birth as a gopa or gopī, or even as a peacock or tree or anything, anywhere within the sixty-four square-mile Vraja-maṇḍala. There I will acquire the company of a rasika devotee, who being full of the bhāva of Vṛndāvana, will describe all of these pastimes to me, and then my life will be meaningful.”

When sādhakas study and learn these verses, deeply meditating within themselves on their meanings while taking harināma, they will act as stimuli to fully experience the bhāva described in the verse above. Then one’s mind will not wander here and there. We should not just walk around talking to others while chanting, but taking the mālā we should sit in a solitary place and give it our mind and heart. Our previous ācāryas chanted all night long,

meditating on one śloka after another. For half an hour the waves of the bhāva of one particular śloka would be coming to them: sometimes they would be fully submerged in those waves, sometimes they would rise to the surface and float on those waves, and then they would move on to the next śloka. As they did this more and more the whole night would pass, and where it went, they wouldn't know. This is the traditional method of bhajana.

Through these verses Parīkṣit Mahārāja is making the bhakti of his mother steady and strengthening her determination for gopī-bhāva, and through these same verses Sanātana Gosvāmī is nurturing us. There is a blend of so many different bhāvas in Vṛndāvana, but in the end, applying some polish to these sentiments, he emphasises gopī-bhāva. There are many verses here, and they are all beneficial to the cultivation of bhajana. To develop and strengthen this bhāva within us, we will study these verses in sequence, and from this endeavour intense hankering for this bhāva will certainly arise within us.

*dhanyeyam adya dharaṇī tṛṇa-vīrudhas tvaṭpāda-sprśo druma-latāḥ  
karajābhimṛṣṭāḥ nadyo drayaḥ khaga-mṛgāḥ sadayāvalokair gopyo ntareṇa  
bhujayor api yat-sprhā śrīḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.8 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.107

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma, “Today this land, along with all its green grass, has become fortunate due to receiving the touch of Your lotus feet. And receiving the touch of the fingers of Your lotus hands, the trees, creepers, and bushes consider that they have attained the greatest treasure. Receiving Your affectionate glances, the rivers, mountains, birds, and animals are all feeling fully gratified. But most fortunate of all are the vraja-gopīs who have been embraced to Your strong chest, a favour which even Lakṣmīdevī herself always desires.”

This verse describes the time when Kṛṣṇa is at the junction of His paugaṇḍa-līlā (ages six to ten) and kiśora-līlā (ages ten to sixteen). At this

time His full beauty and charm are becoming more apparent, and His limbs are filling out. He would feel shy if He were to remain naked at this age. Now He enjoys taking the cows out to graze, and jumping about and creating mischief with His friends. At this age His form is like a bud which is beginning to open; it has not yet become a flower, but it is gradually opening and becoming more charming. Previously no fragrance came from the bud, and no bee would have been hovering around it. But as it opens more and more, the fragrance begins to come and there is nectar available to the bee. When it spreads out and becomes fully mature, it means that Kṛṣṇa has reached the kiśora age. Now that Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva have become a little older, Their forms have become very charming. Their feet have also become bigger; previously they were thin from heel to toe, but now like ripe bananas Their feet have become big and very soft, and whereas before the soles of Their feet had yellowish complexions, now they have begun to take on a reddish hue. Now Kṛṣṇa has become a little clever in speaking; instead of always speaking directly, He has learned to speak in a roundabout way. These are all symptoms of this age.

His newfound cleverness in speech is evident in His speaking of this verse. To avoid praising Himself, He uses the presence of Baladeva Prabhu as a pretext to express His feelings. Because at this age He has ...become a little intelligent, He realises that He should never praise Himself; praising oneself is like committing suicide. Here He wants to describe how Vṛndāvana is more glorious than any place within the three worlds, and even more glorious than Vaikuṇṭha. He begins by saying that the Earth is fortunate. Why is the Earth fortunate? Because of the presence of India. Why is India so glorious? Because of the presence of Vṛndāvana. And why is Vṛndāvana so glorious? Because of the presence of the gopas and gopīs. Why are the gopas and gopīs glorious? Because amongst them are Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. And why are They glorious? Because of the mutual prema between Them, and that is our highest objective. If not for the amorous prema of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, then all of our endeavours would be meaningless. It is prayed for again and

again by the topmost devotees, and Rādhā's prema is so glorious that it overpowers Kṛṣṇa Himself. But He doesn't describe all of this directly by saying, "I am the supreme ornament which beautifies Vṛndāvana." Because He is now entering His kiśora age, when speaking He knows how to keep this bhāva hidden and how to skilfully reveal it.

Together Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are taking the cows out to graze, and upon seeing the beauty and splendour of the Vṛndāvana forest, at once Kṛṣṇa becomes overwhelmed with emotion. What is the meaning of ...vṛndāvana ? It means the forest of Vṛndā or tulasī. There are many other wonderful trees and plants found there, but the tulasī tree is primary. It can also mean the forest where Vṛndādevī is the queen. Why is she known as the queen of Vṛndāvana? Because she arranges amorous meetings between Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. Another meaning of ...vṛndā is ...group , meaning groups of cows, gopas, and gopīs, and ...avana can mean one who nourishes and protects. So Vṛndāvana can also mean the ones who provide stimuli which nurture and increase the prema in Śrī Govinda and the cows, gopas, and gopīs. More meanings have been given, but these three are primary.

As Kṛṣṇa was speaking this verse, He was remembering His own pastimes, and waves of bhāva began to flow inside Him. As He was going along with His friends, the ānanda He felt knew no limits, and He said, "My dear brother, today Pṛthivī-devī (the Earth) has become fortunate, and the hairs of her body, which are the grass, creepers, vines, and trees, are standing on end in ecstatic rapture. The grass, creepers, and vines, receiving the touch of Your lotus feet, and the trees, being touched by Your hands as You pick fruits and flowers, have today become fully gratified. And the rivers, mountains, birds, deer, and all other animals, receiving affectionate glances from You, have today become especially fortunate. But the most fortunate of all are the gopīs, who have received what even Lakṣmīdevī herself desires - being embraced between Your two strong arms."

From the very beginning of creation, Pṛthivī-devī has been serving Bhagavān. Whenever He desired to assume an incarnation, He would

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descend on this Earth and grace the land with His footprints. Varāha held the Earth on His snout, and at that time Pṛthivī-devī became His wife, and from them a son, Narakāśura, was born. And the Earth is always in contact with Bhagavān's form of Śeṣa as He holds her on His head. From time immemorial she has been receiving such good opportunities, but Kṛṣṇa tells Balarāma, "Today, by receiving the touch of Your feet, the Earth has become especially fortunate. Why? Because You are now at the junction of Your paugaṇḍa and kiśora ages and Your lotus feet are especially soft, and such a nice fragrance is coming from them. You move along the Earth like an intoxicated baby elephant. Has the Earth ever received such an opportunity before? Today the Earth has really become fortunate."

Here someone may point out that at that time Kṛṣṇa had been in contact with the Vṛndāvana forest for only ten and a half years, whereas Śrī Rāmacandra wandered in the forest of Daṇḍakāraṇya for fourteen years. In bare feet He also walked the entire distance to South India before entering Laṅka, so did Pṛthivī-devī not become as fortunate then as she did during kṛṣṇa-līlā? But Rāma was banished to the forest, and when in the last year of His exile Rāvaṇa kidnapped Sītā, He wandered here and there crying in anguish. Therefore at that time Pṛthivī-devī certainly became fortunate from the touch of His feet, but she must have also felt very sad. She really became fortunate when Kṛṣṇa came in an immensely beautiful form, with a peacock feather in His crown He would smile as He was decorated by His mother in the morning, and then accompanied by Śrīdāmā and Subala and the other sakhās He would take the cows out to graze and jump about with the calves. Just as the young offspring of a deer playfully jump about, He would go along with all of his friends with a happy heart. Picking flowers with their own hands they would make garlands and decorate each other, and arriving at places like Kusuma-sarovara, Rādhā-kuṇḍa, and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, they would enjoy pastimes which were saturated with rasa. With special care Kṛṣṇa would string one garland which was not meant for any of the sakhās, and feeling great happiness as He thought of whom He would place this



garland on, He tucked it away. Who can estimate the great good fortune of those flowers, being picked and made into a garland by Kṛṣṇa's own beautiful hands? When in the evening He would place that garland on a certain devotee, He would feel supremely blissful. Did any of this happen in rāma-līlā? There was constant heartbreak in Rāmacandra's pastimes, but in contrast in kṛṣṇa-līlā there was so much carefree happiness.

In the same way as we may caress one person whom we love and lovingly slap another, Bhagavān has touched the Earth in different ways in His different incarnations. Rāmacandra touched the Earth, and Nṛsimhadeva also touched the Earth. Assuming a fearful form, Nṛsimhadeva appeared, and being extremely angry He killed Hiraṇyakaśipu. All of the residents of the heavenly and lower planetary systems were petrified with fear, and at that time the Earth did not experience great ānanda. But when Kṛṣṇa touched the Earth in such a beautiful form, she really became fortunate.

The rivers, especially the Yamunā, also became fortunate. At that time Mānasī-gaṅgā was also a river, though now it is in the form of a kuṇḍa, and it also became fortunate. He would lovingly glance towards the rivers because there He would sport with the gopīs and sakhās. The rivers would make a sweet sound as they flowed gently, and bees would be hovering around the blooming lotuses. The soft breeze would carry the fragrance, and the entire scene would be so beautiful. Through the bestowal of His affectionate glances, He would also shower the nectar of His kindness upon the hills and mountains, because near them were very attractive kuṣjas where there would be very beautiful grass, and on the pretext of taking the cows to graze He would go there. Sitting on the large rocks with His friends, they would decorate one another. These kuṣjas, such as the ones near Kusuma-sarovara, were very beautiful, and there He would enjoy with the gopīs as well.

This verse describes four benedictions: receiving Kṛṣṇa's affectionate glances, receiving the touch of His feet, receiving the touch of His hands, and being embraced by His arms as the gopīs were. When Kṛṣṇa would be taking

the cows out to graze, from hidden positions the gopīs would lovingly glance at Him, and then He would glance towards them with such affection that it would immerse them in remembrance of His sweetness. In the same way He would glance towards the different birds and animals, and from this they also became fortunate. Sometimes a peacock, being maddened in bhāva, would come near Him, and He would gently stroke it with His hand. Sometimes He would call a parrot, and when it flew onto His hand, while stroking it gently He would teach it to speak and then listen to what the parrot said back. The calves would also receive the touch of His hands. Very young calves, perhaps only a few days old - forgetting the company of their mothers they would jump along as they accompanied Kṛṣṇa to the forest. As they proceeded further and further, they would become fatigued, so Kṛṣṇa would take them on His lap and massage their legs, and with great prema He would speak sweet words to them. Tell me - how much good fortune did those calves possess? He would also take the sakhās on His lap and stroke them, and in this way Subala and others received the touch of His hands. Considering the diverse sentiments of the residents of Vṛndāvana, He touches them in different ways. When Kṛṣṇa takes the cows and His friends to drink from and sport in the rivers, the rivers have one type of sentiment, and when He goes there with the gopīs, they have a different type of bhāva. Receiving the touch of Kṛṣṇa's feet, the rivers swell in ānanda. The trees have the sentiment of sakhās, and they receive the touch of both His hands and feet. The cows have the sentiment of being His mother, and the calves have the sentiment of sakhās. The creepers have the bhāva of sakhīs, and when He picks flowers from them, it is as if He is teasing a gopī with His touch. The gopīs also receive the touch of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet:

*yat te sujāta-caraṇāmburuhaṁ staneṣu  
bhītāḥ śanaiḥ priya dadhīmahi karkaśeṣu  
tenātavīm aṭasi tad vyathate na kiṁ svit  
kūrpādibhir bhramati dhīr bhavad-āyusāṁ naḥ*

“O dear one! Your lotus feet are so soft that we place them gently on our breasts, fearing that they will be harmed. Our life rests only in You, and therefore our minds are filled with anxiety that Your tender feet might be wounded by pebbles as You roam about on the forest path.”

The gopīs are arguing with their own minds. Their minds are saying to them, “Why are you worrying about Kṛṣṇa? There is no necessity.”

But from deep within their hearts, from their very ātmā, the gopīs reply, “We are upset because Kṛṣṇa’s feet are very soft, and we are afraid that they will be pricked by thorns and pebbles. We desire that He should never feel any pain.”

“Is Kṛṣṇa blind? He has eyes, doesn’t He? He can see where to place His feet while walking.”

“Hey mind, the calves run here and there, and do they only go to safe and smooth places? They run near the mountains, rivers, and jungles, and they also have hooves which protect them from sharp objects. But if Kṛṣṇa goes to such places, His feet will be burned by the hot sand or pricked by thorns and pebbles. O mind, you have no intelligence!”

“But in Vṛndāvana there are no such thorns and pebbles. Everything here is viśuddha-sattva. They appear to be ordinary thorns, but it is as if they are made of rubber. Will rubber thorns prick your feet? They give a very soft touch to Kṛṣṇa’s tender feet when He steps on them. And the pebbles are softer than butter! By the influence of viśuddha-sattva, Pṛthivī-devī has decorated her landscape with these soft and golden pebbles so Kṛṣṇa will never feel any pain.”

In this way they were arguing with their minds. The gopīs received the touch of those feet in the rāsa-līlā, a benediction which even Lakṣmīdevī desires, and Brahmā is also always meditating on those feet:

*āhuś ca te nalina-nābha padāravindaṃ yogeśvarair hṛdi vicintyam agādha-  
bodhaiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg.  
10.82.48

Such great storehouses of knowledge as Brahmā, Śaṅkara, the Kumāras, and Śukadeva Gosvāmī are always trying to remember Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, but only with great difficulty do those feet appear in their meditation. Responding to Kṛṣṇa's teasing with jealous anger, the gopīs say, "You have instructed us to meditate, but realisation of You rarely comes even in the meditation of the most highly learned devotees! We want You to come back to Vṛndāvana. And those feet which are being meditated on by so many - we desire to play with them directly. What to speak of holding them within our brains in meditation, we desire to hold them close to us. Meditation will not satisfy us, so we won't do it!"

They desire to receive the touch of His feet while they are decorating Him, and then they will also receive the touch of His hands. And in the end they will receive the benediction of being embraced between His two strong arms. Kṛṣṇa will be touching their feet also, when they exhibit māna (jealous anger) and He is trying to appease them. Then everything is reversed, and Lakṣmī also desires all of this.

So in this verse, when Kṛṣṇa says, "Bhaiyā (My dear brother), today the Earth has become glorious," He is simply using the presence of Baladeva Prabhu as a pretext so that the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa Himself, the sweetness of the gopīs, and the glories of Vṛndāvana can all be specifically described. And why has Vṛndāvana become glorious? Because in that place the grass and creepers received the touch of Kṛṣṇa's feet, its vines and trees received the touch of His hands, and its rivers, mountains, birds, and animals received His affectionate glances. But above all Vṛndāvana is especially glorious because of the presence of the gopīs, whom Kṛṣṇa Himself serves.

## Chapter Two

### The Peacocks Dance to Kṛṣṇa's Flute Melody

After preparing lunch for Kṛṣṇacandra and Baladeva, Yaśodā along with Nanda Bābā follows Them for a great distance as They take the cows out to graze for the day. Finally, after bidding Them farewell for the day, they return home. After cooking for Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Her sakhīs return to Yāvaṭa. As Rādhikā's sakhīs sit near Her, each of them in their own specific parties as taṭastha (neutral), svapakṣa (belonging to Rādhikā's own group), and suhṛda (friendly), they all begin to meditate on Kṛṣṇa. They become deeply spellbound, and when He sometimes appears to their internal vision, they become enthralled in viraha-rasa. Seeing how Rādhikā is especially immersed in viraha-rasa and oblivious to all external considerations, the sakhīs call out to Her and bring even more remembrance of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes to Her by speaking this verse:

*vṛndāvanam sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtim yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-  
lakṣmi govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam prekṣyādri-sānv-  
avaratānya-samasta-sattvaṁ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.10 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.108

“O sakhī Rādhē! Vṛndāvana is more glorious than heaven, Vaikuṇṭha, and even more glorious than Ayodhyā and Dvārakā-purī, because it has been graced with the footprints of Devakī-suta. And only in this Vṛndāvana are the peacocks dancing in rhythm to the flute melody of Govinda. Hearing the sound of the flute and seeing the peacocks dancing, all of the birds, animals, and other living entities have become stunned.”

Here ...Devakī refers to the other name of Yaśodā, so in this verse ... Devakī-suta means Yaśodā-nandana Kṛṣṇa, and His footprints are beautifying Vṛndāvana. When Akrūra and later Uddhava went to Nandagrāma, they saw these footprints everywhere. Seeing them, Akrūra fell down to offer praṇāma

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and rolled on the ground, and crying profusely said, “Today I am so fortunate to have the darśana of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet!”

Playing very deep notes on the flute, Govinda enters the forest near Govardhana. Immediately all the peacocks approach Him making the ...ke-kah sound, and they see that He appears like a dark raincloud. Because He uses the end holes of the flute to produce very deep notes, His playing of the flute is like thunder, and His yellow cloth is like lightning. The peacocks become maddened, and forming a circle around Kṛṣṇa, they begin dancing with great bhāva to the flute melody. Hearing the sound of the flute, all ...sattva - meaning living entities - become stunned and abandon their usual course of activities; animals such as tigers and bears even abandon their violent natures. Sattva can also mean that everything in the spiritual world is viśuddha-sattva (comprised of pure spiritual energy). There is not a touch of mundane sattva, rajas, or tamasa in that realm. There are so many objects in Vaikuṇṭha, and they are all viśuddha-sattva. Especially it is known as the essence of the hlādinī and samvit potencies combined, which is found in the hearts of the eternal rāgātmikā devotees there. If greed arises in the heart of a jīva for the sentiment of those devotees and he performs bhajana following in their footsteps, then when even one molecule of their devotion reflects into his heart, it can be called sattva. There are three kinds of sattva: viśuddha-sattva, sattva, and miśra-sattva (miśra means mixed). Miśra-sattva exists within the conditioned souls, sattva within the liberated souls who have not yet developed bhakti, and viśuddha-sattva within the dhāma and Bhagavān’s eternal associates.

Here, with some jealous anger, the gopīs are revealing the feelings of their hearts: “All of the animals, birds, insects, and everything of Vṛndāvana has become fortunate. In an independent way Kṛṣṇa is bestowing His touch on everyone and everything in Vṛndāvana. When He climbs the hills His feet are placed here and there, and even the trees and flowers are receiving His touch. But there is no possibility of us receiving this benediction, and therefore in Vṛndāvana we are the most unfortunate people.”

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As we mentioned before, there are thorns in Vṛndāvana also, but before Kṛṣṇa steps on them they become softer than butter. Experiencing the touch of His feet, they melt in divine bliss. With jealous anger the gopīs are saying, “As of yet our hearts have not become similarly melted in kṛṣṇa-prema; therefore if we could become thorns or blades of grass in Vṛndāvana, our lives would then become successful. For us there are so many obstacles. We are not able to go before Him and touch His feet and speak with Him. We are not able to fan Him or serve Him in any way during the daytime; there are so many restrictions upon us, but there are no such restrictions whatsoever for all of the other living entities in Vṛndāvana. If we were to become blades of grass, or thorns, or vines, or ponds, or the dust of Vṛndāvana, we could receive His touch; but in this form it is not possible.” Here, in expressing their jealous anger, they are describing the good fortune of the land of Vṛndāvana. They go on to say that Bhagavān is also present in heaven in the form of Vāmana, in a form with thousands of heads and in other forms also. Although He is also present in these forms, They are partial forms; all incarnations are not equal. Those incarnations which possess more of Bhagavān’s qualities, potencies, and rasa are superior. Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, and Nṛsiṃha possess more of these in comparison to other incarnations, and are therefore known as paravāsthā-avatāras. But of these three, Kṛṣṇa is avatārī, the source of all incarnations, and the very basis of all rasa - raso vai saḥ. So because He is sporting there, Vṛndāvana is the most glorious place.

In his commentary on this verse, Sanātana Gosvāmī says that Kṛṣṇa played ...mṛdu-mandra on the flute. What is the meaning of ...mṛdu-mandra ? When rainclouds begin to gather, the sky at once becomes dark, and very softly and slowly thunder comes. When the clouds clash violently it produces loud thunder and lightning also, but at first they produce a very soft and deep thunder, and that is called ...mandra . Kṛṣṇa produced a similar sound on the flute, but with ...mṛdu , sweetness. The nature of the peacock is such that when it sees the sky darkening and hears thunder, it begins dancing madly. When Kṛṣṇa entered the forest, what did He see? Girirāja Govardhana

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resplendent with creepers, blooming flowers, and ripe fruits. The breeze was blowing very gently, seemingly unable to carry the full weight of the flowers fragrance. Seeing this natural splendour, the desire for enjoyment arose in Kṛṣṇa, and He played the flute very softly. Hearing this deep vibration, the peacocks went mad, dancing in rhythm with their tail-feathers fully spread out. Then all of the animals, birds, and insects of Vṛndāvana congregated in the meadows of Govardhana to witness the performance.

The peacocks thought, “He is playing such a beautiful melody, and dancing to that we are feeling great ānanda, but we have nothing to offer Him in return.”

After professional actors enact some of Bhagavān’s pastimes, they place a mūrti of Kṛṣṇa or Rāmacandra on a plate and approach the audience for contributions. Seeing that others have placed some money on the plate, everyone feels obliged to give something. There is some intimidation or psychology used in this method. But when someone wants to give of their own free will because they genuinely appreciated a performance, they will reach in their pocket and no matter what note they first pull out - whether it is two rupees, five rupees, or ten rupees - they will give it immediately. So one of these peacocks was thinking, “I have nothing valuable to offer Him - no golden necklace around my neck or any valuable ornaments. I am simply an animal, but the feathers of my tail are very valuable! There is nothing in this world which can compare to their beauty, and upon seeing them everyone becomes pleased. With their seven colours they are so attractive, so is there any reason why I shouldnt offer Him one?” Therefore he left behind one of his feathers.

Seeing it Kṛṣṇa thought, “This peacock is very loving; he has fully appreciated My flute-playing, and offered Me one of his valuable feathers. There is nothing artificial in this offering.” Lifting the feather up and placing it on His head, He thought, “Just as the flute is dear to Me, this peacock feather has now become dear to Me. While walking, resting, dreaming, standing, or



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sitting, I will never abandon it. Wherever I may go in Vraja, I will never abandon the flute or this peacock feather.” This is the origin of the peacock feather becoming Kṛṣṇa’s most celebrated ornament.

The peacock saw, “Oh! I left that feather for Him, but He didn’t merely put it in His pocket! He has placed it on His head, the most valuable of all His bodily parts! Today my life has become completely successful.”

If we desire to offer a gift to our guru, to the Vaiṣṇava, or to Bhagavān, but upon receiving it they were to say, “What need do I have for this? I have millions of good quality things,” we would feel pain in our hearts. But instead they accept it and say, “Oh, what a beautiful thing you have brought me!” and then we feel very pleased. Similarly Sudāmā Vipra brought Kṛṣṇa some uncooked low-grade rice, and honouring his offering Kṛṣṇa snatched it from him saying, “Oh, such a nice snack you have brought Me!” And even though it was uncooked, dry, and tasteless, He immediately chewed it up and said, “Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā have never offered Me anything this nice!” Hearing this, how did Sudāmā Vipra feel? “Today I have become fully gratified.”

So the peacock saw that he had offered Kṛṣṇa such a trivial gift, yet Kṛṣṇa had taken it and placed it on His head. Then Kṛṣṇa played the flute with so much prema that He became maddened along with the peacocks. Before in this verse, “anu matta” referred to the peacocks becoming intoxicated, but it can refer to Kṛṣṇa as well. Then He played the flute with even more prema, and the peacocks became more maddened, Kṛṣṇa also became more maddened, and in this way there was competition between them. If someone offers something with prema, and it is also accepted with prema, then both parties become the tasters of that prema, and that is precisely what happened here.

While Kṛṣṇa was playing the flute in this way and the dancing was going on, all of the sattva, meaning the birds and animals, became motionless and watched and listened. But don’t consider them to be like the birds and animals of this world; the birds and animals of Goloka are all viśuddha-

sattva, and there is no trace of tamasa, rajasa, or material sattva in them. Even when the jīva becomes very elevated, perhaps just before liberation, still there is some trace of material sattva in him. But in this world most people are tamasic, which means they are affected by lower attributes such as hatred, envy, anger, and the cheating propensity. Then there is rajasa, which is characterised by intense greed for enjoyment. So even when sattva comes, at first it will be mixed with tamasa and rajasa. In the case of Hariscandra Mahārāja, he gave away a great amount in charity, which is sattvic, but it was mixed with rajasa. Karna was very charitable, always spoke the truth, and did good to others, which are all sattvic qualities - but he was affected by anger, envy, and the tendency towards violence, so it was mixed with tamasa. Bharata Mahārāja showed affection for an animal, which was sattvic, but still it was not śuddha-sattva. Only after the jīva attains svarūpa-siddhi and will imminently enter into vastu-siddhi can it be said that he is in viśuddha-sattva. Bhagavān and all of His devotees in Vaikuṇṭha, whether they are peacocks or monkeys or whatever, are situated in viśuddha-sattva.

In order to watch Kṛṣṇa playing the flute and see the dancing of the peacocks, many other birds gathered in groups on the branches of the trees of Govardhana. Below in the forest the deer were also watching, but with their eyes closed, as if in meditation. How could they be watching if their eyes were closed? By saścārī, which means that they were internally experiencing the particular sthāyī-bhāva, or permanent sentiment, that they were situated in. There were a great many species of birds and animals watching from the meadows of Govardhana, and they all displayed the natures of munis. Govinda-veṇuṁ anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyaṁ - the name Govinda comes from the words ...go and ...indate . Go means the gopas, gopīs, cows, and calves. It can also mean Veda, brāhmaṇa, jñāna, the senses, and many other things. Indate means indra, which means master. So Govinda means the one who increases the ānanda of everyone in Vraja by the notes He plays on the flute. Hearing this divine sound, all living entities

forget their normal course of activities. At this time of the day, the birds generally make different sounds in their chirping such as ...che-cha and ...kala-rava , but all of these activities stop, and everyone forgets even their own bodies. This is the meaning of ...avaratānya . In this way everyone stands motionless just listening and watching, thinking, “Aho! This can only be found in Vṛndāvana! Bhagavān is also present in Vaikuṇṭha, but there the sound of the flute cannot be heard. In Ayodhyā and Dvārakā one won’t see peacocks dancing like this. This can only be found in Vṛndāvana, and nowhere else.” Vitanoti means that Vṛndāvana is more glorious than heaven or even Vaikuṇṭha. There Kṛṣṇa exhibits four special qualities: rūpa-mādhurī, veṇu-mādhurī, līlā-mādhurī, and prema-mādhurī (the especially sweet love which His companions in Vraja have for Him). Because Govinda is playing the flute there, the splendour and glories of Vṛndāvana are being proclaimed as the best of all.

How did Kṛṣṇa appear to the peacocks as He was playing the flute? He had the peacock feather placed in His crown, and He was standing in His threefold-bending posture with His right foot wrapped around His left. Seeing this, at once the ānanda of the peacocks increased. Kṛṣṇa was adorned with a guṣṭha-mālā which also included kadamba flowers and tulasī maṣjarīs, which hung down to His knees. A mild fragrance was coming from it and bees were swarming around it. He was wearing bracelets on His wrists, and on His limbs were paintings of spiders. In this way Nanda-nandana was decorated in His forest attire, and He was holding the flute, which has been called His dear sakhi, in His hands. He will never abandon it; it always remains with Him. Sometimes for increasing the waves of līlā and for the pleasure of the gopīs, He enters a kuṣṭha and ...falls asleep . Knowingly He allows the flute to hang loosely in His hand - He is not really sleeping. And seeing Him from a hidden position and thinking that He is sleeping, the gopīs say, “Now we should take the flute!”

Then Rādhikā says to the other gopīs, “Who is prepared to do it? If He awakens He will grab you!” Then everyone becomes afraid. In pretending to

be asleep, Kṛṣṇa certainly has some special intention. If there is any person who can take the flute, it is Rādhikā. All the gopīs propose that She do it, and She agrees. Smiling and watching Him very carefully, She approaches stealthily like a cat. Standing over Him, She looks carefully to see if He is really sleeping; then She snatches the flute and quickly exits the kuṣja. Then Kuṇḍalatā comes and scolds Kṛṣṇa, “Your everything is gone, and You are sleeping?” Getting up and looking around, Kṛṣṇa says, “Hey! Where has My flute gone?” Very perturbed He says, “Who took it? Did you see who took it?” Then He approaches the gopīs, and as if He knows nothing, says, “Have you seen My flute?” In this way He knowingly allows the flute to be taken in order to taste some special rasa; otherwise He would never abandon it. In the Brahma-saṁhitā it says that the flute is His priya-sakhi. The vibration of this flute can melt anything, even rugged mountains, and it is also capable of entering devotees bodies and stealing their hearts. If the flute were not there, then so much of His līlā and vilāsa would be meaningless; such is the importance of the flute. Being held to His lips it drinks the rasa there and becomes intoxicated, inspiring the gopīs to say in the Veṇu-gīta, “This inanimate stick of bamboo is relishing that which is our property - the nectar of Your lips!”

In the verse we are explaining here, the name Devakī-suta has been used. Once, Devakī-suta, Dvāra-kādhīśa, went to the heavenly planets; Vrajendra-nandana Kṛṣṇa didn't go there. Dvārakādhīśa went there to acquire the pārijāta flower to appease the heart of Satyabhāmā, and approaching Indra, He said, “Bhaiyā, you are always very affectionate towards Me; therefore please give Me one pārijāta flower.” When Indra refused to give Him even one flower, Kṛṣṇa uprooted the entire tree, and sitting along with Satyabhāmā on the back of Garuḍa, prepared to leave there. Indra and the demigods tried to stop Him, and after defeating them He returned to Dvārakā and planted the beautiful pārijāta tree in Satyabhāmā's garden. This was Devakī-suta, Dvārakādhīśa Kṛṣṇa, who bestowed the touch of His feet on the heavenly planets, but there you won't find peacocks dancing. He doesn't

play the flute there; if there is anything to be found in His hands there, it will be the conchshell and disc. He didn't play the flute there or exhibit the four special aspects of sweetness which are found only in Vṛndāvana. Therefore the fame of Vraja is greater than that of the heavenly planets, Vaikuṇṭha, or Dvārakā.

In Vaikuṇṭha, Lakṣmī receives the touch of Nārāyaṇa's feet. Nārāyaṇa is an extension of Kṛṣṇa who possesses all six opulences, but the four kinds of mādhurī are not present in Vaikuṇṭha. There you won't find the peacocks dancing to the melody of the flute. Therefore when the word ...Devakī is used in this verse, we can understand it to be another name for Yaśodā, because it is Vṛndāvana-Kṛṣṇa, or Govinda, who played the flute. And when He played the flute, all living entities forgot their normal course of activities and stood silently and motionless, listening. How did the gopīs hear the flute and witness the dancing of the peacocks? Sit-ting in their homes, they heard and saw it all in meditation. They said, "Look! The peacocks are descending to the meadow to dance to the melody of Kṛṣṇa's flute, but can we go there? We also desire to sing and dance with Him, but there are so many restrictions upon us. Our elders are watching over us, so it is not possible for us. Therefore we are greatly unfortunate."

### Chapter Three

#### The Best Servant Of Hari

In the next verse the gopīs glorify Govardhana Hill, which is not only the crown of Vṛndāvana, but the crown of the entire universe.

*hantāyam adrir abalā hari-dāsa-varyo yad-rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparaśa-  
pramodaḥ mānaṁ tanoti saha-go-gaṇayos taylor yat pāṇīya-sūyavasa-  
kandara-kandamūlaiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.18 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.109

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“This Govardhana Hill is the best of all those who are known as hari-dāsa because he is feeling great jubilation from the touch of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. With great respect Govardhana is worshipping Them by providing all Their necessities such as caves, fruits, flowers, and water for Their pleasure, and for the pleasure of Their cowherd friends, cows, and calves.”

Vṛndāvana is glorious because there Kṛṣṇa is playing the flute in the meadows of Govardhana and the peacocks are dancing, and becoming stunned, all of the birds and animals are listening and watching. The gopīs say ...hantāyam , which means they are expressing their feelings of sorrow, yet there is so much ānanda in it. They are disappointed because they cannot have the darśana of Kṛṣṇa and externally join in the festivities, yet they are feeling increasing ānanda as they experience it all internally within their meditation. “We are ...abalā (devoid of strength). Why? The female deer go near Kṛṣṇa with their husbands following behind them, and there is nothing in this world to restrict them. But for us, everyone is an obstacle - our husbands, mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, brothers, and friends. And what is the greatest obstacle of all? The restrictions which exist in our own minds: our fear of being disgraced in society. Therefore we are abalā.” Prema-bhakti is something which is anugatya - without the mercy of the guru, it can never be attained.

*śrī-guru-caraṇa-padma kevala-bhakti-sadma bando mui sāvadhāna mate*

The lotus feet of the guru are the sadma, the shelter, for that śrī, the prema-bhakti for Kṛṣṇa, which exists in the heart of that guru. This is its source. If one does not have devotion for the guru, does not serve him, and is not surrendered to him in all respects, then bhakti will never come. Unless

one attains his mercy, one will never experience bhakti and will never receive the darśana of Kṛṣṇa. Therefore here the gopīs are saying, “Sakhī, for a long time we have been desiring to meet with Kṛṣṇa, but our feet are unable to go there, our eyes are unable to see Him, and our hands are unable to touch Him. In our helpless condition we cannot attain His darśana. The birds and the deer and everyone else is allowed to receive His touch and serve Him, but we are not. However, nearby is Girirāja, who is hari-dāsa-varya - the best of those who are hari-dāsa, and He is guru-tattva. If we surrender to Him, if we go to Him and offer pūjā to Him and serve Him, then certainly we will receive the good opportunity to serve Kṛṣṇa.” This is the nature of guru:

*sākṣād-dharitvena  
samasta-śāstrair uktas  
tathā bhāvyata eva  
sadbhiḥ kintu prabhor yaḥ  
priya eva tasya vande  
guroḥ śrī-caraṇāravindam*

Śrī  
Gurvaṣṭakam  
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The guru is the one who is especially dear to Kṛṣṇa. All jīvas are dear to Him, yet by serving and receiving the mercy of such a guru who can actually overpower Kṛṣṇa by prema, we can meet Him; otherwise we cant meet Him. All devotees performing parikramā of Govardhana should visit the mandira of Harideva. If one performs the entire Govardhana parikramā without first taking darśana of Harideva, then he will not receive the full benefit of his parikramā. So the gopīs are saying, “On the pretext of bathing in Mānasī-gaṅgā, we will first take darśana of Harideva, and then we will go to Girirāja Govardhana where the desires of our hearts will be completely fulfilled. Our

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desires will be completely fulfilled because somewhere on top of Govardhana, Kṛṣṇa is taking the cows to graze and playing with His friends. There we will be able to receive His darśana, to receive His touch, and to freely mix with Him - this is the main objective of our lives.”

This should also be the main objective of our lives. Meeting Kṛṣṇa and attaining Kṛṣṇa’s service - solely for this purpose we are practicing sādhana. Ultimately the sādhana and sādhyā (goal) of bhakti are one and the same. For instance there is śravaṇam - what will we hear? Bhagavat-tattva, and especially māyā-tattva we must understand well: “That which we are seeing now and which we are attached to due to our selfishness will only bring us unhappiness.” Until we surrender to the feet of the guru and follow the sādhana which he prescribes, we are just following the advice given to us by our own minds. When we take exclusive shelter of the guru, he will save us from our own independence. Then we should empty our hearts completely and accept Gurujī’s order and act accordingly. We must make our hearts one with guru and the Vaiṣṇavas, and one with our previous ācāryas like Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Prabhupāda. If we keep our hearts separate from them, then māyā will certainly snatch us. If we don’t surrender our independence to them, then we will only act according to our own desire. We should depend solely on them: “As they instruct me, I will do. I will apply all of my intelligence to carrying out their orders.” Then we will be successful; otherwise bhakti, which is cinmaya and has its own independent nature, will not come easily.

Therefore here the gopīs are saying, “By thousands of our own efforts we will never overcome the obstacles which prevent us from meeting Kṛṣṇa, such as fear of our elders and adherence to the regulations of varṇāśrama-dharma. They will only be overcome when we attain the mercy of Girirāja.” And those of us in the stage of sādhana should never leave the company of that Vaiṣṇava who is actually qualified to be followed. So many distractions may come, but we should never leave him - this is instruction number one.



According to his desire we will move, and then we will surely progress upwards in the kingdom of bhajana. But if we listen instead to the dictates of our minds, we will descend into Rasātala. What kind of things does the mind tell us? “Look, take good care of your body. Remain comfortable, and endeavour only for that happiness which is easily obtained.” And following these instructions we will become trapped in the reactions to our enjoyment and suffer. Therefore instead we should honour the instructions of guru, the Vaiṣṇava, and the śāstra. Like the gopīs are saying in this verse, we are abalā - we have no vitality in our association with sādhus. If we are living in a temple but we never speak to anyone, and we don’t have love for both the guru and other Vaiṣṇavas, then what will happen? We will become isolated and discouraged. Lovingly we should speak with them, ask questions, attentively listen to the answers, and have a mood of mutually offering and accepting with them in all respects. Without them, we are abalā - we have no spiritual strength.

*prācīnānām bhajanamatulaṁ duṣkaraṁ sṛṇvato me nairāsyena jvalati  
hṛdayaṁ bhakti-leśālasasya*

Stava-  
mālā

How did previous great personalities obtain their most cherished objectives? For sixty-thousand years Kaśyapa Ṛṣi and Aditi stood on their hands and went without eating, drinking, and even breathing. After performing such severe austerities, Nārāyaṇa appeared and offered them a boon. Kaśyapa Ṛṣi said, “We desire a son like You, we desire a son like You, we desire a son like You.” Nārāyaṇa replied, “Where will you get a son like Me? Therefore I Myself will come as your son.” And because he had asked three times, Nārāyaṇa became their son in three separate births. We can see what severe austerities Hiraṇyakaśipu performed to obtain only material

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things. For acquiring his own planet, Dhruva Mahārāja performed very severe austerities.

Someone offered Sanātana Gosvāmī a quilt, but fearing that it may make him sleep more, he said, “Burn it!” But on the contrary, what are we doing? With great pleasure all day we are eating, sleeping, joking, laughing, quarrelling and in the midst of all this we take a little harināma. Relatively easily we can rid ourselves of our worldly attachments, but that rare prema which we are aspiring for will not come if we are going on like this. We must have great eagerness, always thinking, “How will I meet Kṛṣṇa?”

Once Bhagavān gave Nārada His darśana and then immediately disappeared, and Nārada began crying profusely. Why did He disappear? “Inside you there is not sufficient eagerness; therefore I have come to increase your eagerness for attaining My association. In your present form you cannot always remain with Me, but when your eagerness to be with Me becomes sufficiently intense, you will automatically shed your present body, and then you will always be able to see Me.” But our bhajana is not filled with eagerness and intensity. If our hearts are not completely melted we will never meet Kṛṣṇa, so there is only one hope: “We are standing on the shores of the ocean of Your kindness, and if even one drop of that ocean falls upon us, then our lives will become meaningful.” Our only hope is that sometime or other we will meet Him.

Therefore if we are fortunate enough to acquire the company of a real Vaiṣṇava, we should stay with him and adopt his ways, hoping that one day we will receive the direct mercy of Kṛṣṇa. The gopīs are saying, “We are abalā because our feet are unable to take us to Kṛṣṇa. Thousands of people will see us and say, ...Where are you going? Or they will say to our parents, ...Where is your daughter going? She has become a disgrace to your family! ...” It is like this in modern times also when a family member begins to engage in bhajana. If a son or daughter drinks and smokes, goes to the cinema, and keeps illicit connections with the opposite sex, then the family

members think nothing of it. But if someone leaves everything for bhajana, they say that he or she has become a disgrace to the family. If a sādhu hears about this, what will he say? “Because he has taken up bhajana, he has become the lamplight of the family.” And hearing of this, that person’s forefathers, whether they are in Pitṛloka or wherever, will begin dancing: “Now a devotee has appeared in our family!”

The gopīs are saying that hari-dāsa-varyo: Govardhana is the best of those who are hari-dāsa. He in whom Kṛṣṇa invests all of His good qualities is called a devotee of Bhagavān, and that person is hari-dāsa. Three personalities have been referred to as hari-dāsa: Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, Uddhava, and Girirāja Govardhana. Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja has three types of relationships with Kṛṣṇa: in vātsalya-bhāva, sakhya-bhāva, and dāsyā-bhāva. He serves Kṛṣṇa in these three sentiments, according to the necessity. He loves Kṛṣṇa in the same way as he does Arjuna and Sahadeva, as a younger brother. As Kṛṣṇa’s friend he jokes and laughs with Him. And by considering that everything he possesses - his kingdom, wealth, wife, sons - is for the service of Kṛṣṇa, he acts as His servant. After Kṛṣṇa had left Hastināpura, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja felt that his kingdom no longer had any value, but as long as Kṛṣṇa was present there, he felt that all of his property was for the service of Kṛṣṇa. Whenever Kṛṣṇa desired to leave there and go to Dvārakā, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja would approach Kuntī and say, “My dear mother, He will not listen to me, but He will listen to you. Please speak with Him.” To Draupadī he would say, “He won’t listen to me, so you just let some tears fall from your eyes. He won’t listen to me because I won’t cry, but by crying a little you will capture Him.” Then because she started crying, and Kuntī cried also, Kṛṣṇa would not go. In this way, sometimes implementing some trickery, he would serve Kṛṣṇa. Even rasika Vaiṣṇavas like Nārada pray to Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, “You are hari-dāsa. Accompanied by His queens Kṛṣṇa comes to your palace, and so many sādhus also come. The sādhus come because they want to experience the glories of Kṛṣṇa, but I have not come

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for that reason. I have come for your darśana; your prema is so elevated that it even overpowers Kṛṣṇa.”

Uddhava is Kṛṣṇa’s minister, friend, and servant, and he even performed the function of a priya-narma sakhā when he delivered a message from Kṛṣṇa to the gopīs. There is pūrṇa (complete) which is Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja, pūrṇater (more complete), which is Uddhava, and pūrṇatam (most complete), which is Girirāja Govardhana. In whichever rasa Kṛṣṇa desires to enjoy, Girirāja Govardhana is ready to serve Him. In the śānta, dāsyā, sakhyā, vātsalyā, mādhyā, and sumādhyā rasas, Govardhana makes the suitable arrangement for Kṛṣṇa, and is therefore known as the best of those who are hari-dāsa. Knowing this, the gopīs are saying here, “We will go to Girirāja, offer pūjā to Him and serve Him, and then we will attain darśana of Kṛṣṇa taking the cows out to graze.”

In his commentary on this verse, Sanātana Gosvāmī explains that the gopīs were thinking: “We have no strength when it comes to tolerating all of the obstacles which prevent us from meeting Kṛṣṇa. We are sitting in our homes, and if any other disturbance comes, we can hold our patience; but for meeting Kṛṣṇa we cannot hold our patience. But if we were to abandon it, what would happen? All would be destroyed for us. We know that Kṛṣṇa has taken the cows out to graze, yet for us to go there would not be proper. If we were to go, then our mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law and all the people of the village would criticise us. Therefore we are holding our patience. If we have any hope of ever receiving the company of Kṛṣṇa, our fear of being disgraced in society, our fear of our elders, and our fear of transgressing our dharma must remain. Therefore we are abalā - we cannot abandon our patience; we don’t possess the strength to do it. We are unable to go there.”

In this world also these considerations exist. One would be afraid of the reaction in society if he were to leave his home, wife, children, and job to engage in bhajana. In our kṛṣṇa-bhajana, our lack of strength is also an obstacle. We are very lazy, and we are always thinking of our bodily comfort.

And especially those who are gr̥hasthas have so many responsibilities to society and to their families which obstruct them.

Soon after taking birth, Śukadeva Gosvāmī left his home and entered the jungle. His father Vyāsadeva was left crying, “My dear son! My dear son!” but Śukadeva didn’t answer him. Who answered him? Only the echo of the forest; his call didn’t even reach his son’s ears. If not today, then tomorrow or the next day our eagerness for kṛṣṇa-bhajana should be like Śukadeva’s, and then all of our abalā sentiments will go far away. When we really desire to overcome all of the obstacles to our bhajana, where will we get the strength to do so? The gopīs are saying, “For this we will go to Girirāja Govardhana, because He is the best hari-dāsa. Why? Because He doesn’t just serve Kṛṣṇa, but mānaṁ tanoti saha-go-gaṇayos tayoṛ yat - Kṛṣṇa has so many companions, and He serves all of them as well. He provides pure and fragrant water for the cows and sakhās to drink, and for washing Kṛṣṇa’s feet.”

By providing all necessities, Girirāja Govardhana would offer respect not only to Kṛṣṇa, but to His companions as well. Many people are engaged in guru-sevā, but few offer respect to the servants of the guru; but when one performs the service of respecting the guru’s servants, the guru is even more pleased. Similarly many devotees are serving Kṛṣṇa, but if someone serves Kṛṣṇa’s devotees and pleases them, then automatically Kṛṣṇa will be pleased. Govardhana not only provides pure water, but beautiful, soft grass as well. Eating this grass, the cows become strong and give ample milk which satisfies Kṛṣṇa. And for the sakhās Govardhana provides not only water, but all kinds of fruits which simply upon being seen increase their happiness: bananas, lemons, pomegranates, coconut, and tāla, which is especially fragrant.

Govardhana also provided caves for the sakhās when they became tired from tending the cows. On hot days the caves would be cooling, and on cold days they gave warmth, and within these caves were kuṣjas with mirrors composed of jewels where one could see his reflection. All materials for

decorating oneself and others were available there, and in this way it also became a meeting place for Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs. Nearby are such places as Dāna-gati and Dāna-nivartana-kunḍa, where Kṛṣṇa and Rādhikā and Her sakhīs took taxes from one another. So the gopīs are praying, “O Girirāja Govardhana, You are a witness to all of Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes; please give us a place from where we can also witness His pastimes.”

Hearing these words of the gopīs, a sādhaka’s hankering will increase and he will think, “When will such a day be mine, when I can go to Girirāja Govardhana with these sentiments of the gopīs flowing in my heart? I also desire to witness Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes during the day.” This desire is the aim and objective of our lives, and the very pinnacle of bhajana.

#### Chapter Four

#### The Clouds, Rivers and Trees Serve Kṛṣṇa

If someone is inimical to Bhagavān, then they will have to undergo much suffering and be very unhappy. They will have to take millions of births in the material world, and will never attain happiness in any birth. The jīva is a part of Bhagavān; his very intrinsic form is as a servant of Bhagavān. Abandoning this understanding, the jīva becomes opposed to Bhagavān and thinks, “I am the enjoyer of this world,” “I am the master of everything,” and “Everything has been created for my enjoyment.” This is the illusion of the opposed jīva. When Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the vision of the gopīs, in divine madness they went searching for Him. In reality He is never far away from them; but on the contrary we have made ourselves separate from Him. If in our search for Bhagavān we have the same kind of eagerness that the gopīs have, then we can meet Him. But without such eagerness, we will never meet Him.

The gopīs possess an extremely intense eagerness to meet Kṛṣṇa, and if even a fraction of that arises within us, then it can be said that we are really searching for Kṛṣṇa in our sādhana-bhajana. But from where will this eagerness come? Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī Rādhikā both assume forms which are

easily accessible to conditioned souls. For the purpose of bringing jīvas towards Himself, Kṛṣṇa has become the śālāgrāma-śilā, and His dearest one has become tulasī. Kṛṣṇa has also entered this world in the form of Girirāja Govardhana, and His dearest one has come in the form of Yamunājī. We can see how merciful Bhagavān is: so much so that He has made the arrangement for everyone to attain Him. Govardhana is accessible for everyone, and is fully capable of bestowing kṛṣṇa-prema. It has been said that He fulfils whatever desires people approach Him with, and in this way has arranged a very nice trap for them. If anyone desires a son, wealth, to get their son or daughter married, a better job, or whatever, they can go to Govardhana, beg from Him, and He will bestow those things. In this way, at first He slowly captures people by grabbing the end of their finger, and then He grabs the whole finger, next the hand, and finally He grabs everything.

Those of you who have travelled on the trains in India have seen how they are very crowded and how no seats are available. So after boarding the train people first move near a bench, then place their hand down on it, then spread their hand out a little, and then begin to edge their way in until they have squeezed themselves into a seat. In the same way, Girirāja, guru, and the Vaiṣṇavas gradually bring the conditioned soul towards bhakti.

Having become separated from Kṛṣṇa, the gopīs are thinking, “Kṛṣṇa is everything to us, so how will we meet Him? We must get the mercy of a Vaiṣṇava, and who are the best Vaiṣṇavas? Yudhiṣṭhira, Uddhava, and Girirāja Govardhana; and amongst them, Girirāja is the best. Going to Yudhiṣṭhira or Uddhava won’t be fruitful; they cannot give us what we desire. Only Girirāja can give it.” In this way, if we really feel that Bhagavān is our only necessity, we will have such eagerness. Then our eagerness will lead us to ask a Vaiṣṇava, “How can we meet Kṛṣṇa? How can we overcome all of our despair?” This is where we recognise our necessity for a guru. For obtaining any material object a guru is not necessary, but in spiritual matters approaching a guru is necessary. Girirāja will give mercy, Yamunā-devī will

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give mercy, Vṛndāvana-dhāma will give mercy, and we should pray to all of them.

Here the gopīs, through the eyes of vipralambha-bhāva in separation from Kṛṣṇa, are seeing prema in all the residents of Vṛndāvana but themselves. This is the symptom of an *uttama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava. There are three levels of Vaiṣṇava. The first is the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, and his symptoms are that even though he offers pūjā to the Deity and accepts that the water of holy places and the water which has washed the Deity is sacred, he does not detect the presence of Bhagavān within the hearts of other jīvas. He considers the body to be the self, and has no respect for the devotees of Bhagavān. He doesn't believe that the guru knows all; he thinks that the guru may possess more knowledge than he does, but that he certainly doesn't know everything. Therefore he feels that there is no real necessity of taking advice from the guru. Upon not obtaining the material things which he desires from his practice of bhajana, he may become disgusted and even abandon his bhajana.

The symptoms of the *madhyama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava have been told to be that he has love for Bhagavān, he has friendship with other devotees, he is merciful to those who are faithful, and he remains indifferent towards those who are opposed to Bhagavān. He wants to give mercy to everyone, but it is not possible to love everyone; it is inappropriate. One cannot show love to a snake or a tiger - they will only attack you. Therefore he behaves suitably towards others according to their qualification.

The *uttama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava sees the presence of his master in the hearts of all jīvas, and believes that they all have the same feelings for Bhagavān that he does. Prahlāda Mahārāja saw that his worshipable Deity was in the hearts of all living entities, and that even the trees had the same feelings of śānta and dāsyā-rasa towards Bhagavān that he did. Similarly, the gopīs saw their own sentiments sometimes within Girirāja, sometimes within the deer of Vṛndāvana, and sometimes even within the clouds. And they also saw that just as Kṛṣṇa loves them, He also loves all the other residents of



Vṛndāvana in the same way. Therefore the *uttama-adhikārī* doesn't see anywhere in the world a *jīva* who is not engaged in *bhajana* and who doesn't have the same sentiment for Kṛṣṇa as he himself does.

*mama vartmānuvartante manuṣyāḥ pārtha sarvaśaḥ*

Bhag.-gītā  
4.11

“Everyone follows My path in all respects, O son of Pṛthā.” The highest devotees really see that everyone is serving Bhagavān - don't think that this statement is an exaggeration. The *gopīs* actually see that, “Just as we love Kṛṣṇa, all of the trees, creepers, birds, mountains, and rivers of Vṛndāvana are fully conscious and are serving Kṛṣṇa.” They are planning to go to Govardhana on the pretext of going to bathe at Mānasī-gaṅgā and having the darśana of Harideva because nearby there, Kṛṣṇa is taking the cows out to graze, and then they will surely receive His darśana. In this way, with his eyes closed and taking *harināma*, an *uttama-adhikārī* similarly meditates on the *līlā* of Kṛṣṇa, especially His *aṣṭakāla-līlā*. Meditating more and more, eventually the object of his meditation appears to him, and he becomes absorbed in that flow: “I am at Govardhana, and I am doing my service.” When his vision begins to dissipate, he begins to lament, “Hāya! Hāya!” And here, as the day progresses and the *gopīs* are sitting in their homes and conversing, their absorption in the previous *bhāva* begins to diminish, and one *sakhī* says to Rādhikā:

*dṛṣṭvātape vraja-paśūn saha rāma-gopaiḥ*  
*saścārayantam anu veṇum udīrayantam*  
*prema-pravṛddha uditaḥ kusumāvalībhiḥ*  
*sakhyur vyadhāt sva-vapuṣāmbuda ātapatram*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.16 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.110

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“Seeing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma playing Their flutes in the afternoon sun and taking the cows and calves out for grazing, the clouds burst with divine love, and like an umbrella shield their friend Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the sun while showering tiny drops of rain that are like a shower of flowers.”

Now it is afternoon time, and taking the cows out to graze accompanied by Baladeva and the gopas, Kṛṣṇa has entered the forest. Desiring fresh grass to eat, the cows grazed on and on until they reached the rocks of Govardhana. The rocks were very hot in the afternoon sun, and the sand and soil below their feet were also very hot. Thinking that the cows and His friends were feeling some pain due to this, Kṛṣṇa played the flute in such a way that at once the clouds gathered and began to shower soft rain. In India there are many rāgas which are well-known for producing different effects. Once there was a guru named Haridāsajī who was a master of rāgas, and he had two disciples named Baijubāvara and Tanasena. Tanasena was a singer in the court of the king, and it was his policy that if anyone came to Delhi to sing, they were obligated to challenge him in the royal court - and if they were defeated, they would have to face punishment from the king. Hearing of this, Baijubāvara went to Delhi and began skilfully singing different melodies, and a large crowd of people gathered to hear him. The news of this reached the king, who said, “Who is this person daring to sing here? This is a great insult to Tanasena!” So he called for Baijubāvara and said to him, “You must have the proper qualification, otherwise you are not allowed to sing in Delhi.”

Baijubāvara said, “Alright, we will have a competition. Where will it be held?”

“It will be held in the royal assembly.”

“Then who will decide the winner? Who will decide whose singing is the sweetest and the most beautiful?”

“All of my queens here will decide.”

“No, I can’t trust them. I want the animals of the jungle to make the decision, and then I will accept it. The queens will all certainly be prejudiced.

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Therefore we should go to the jungle and see whose singing pleases the animals most.”

“Alright, so it shall be.” The entire assembly went to the jungle, and first Tanasena sang. Then Baijubāvara sang, and groups of deer immediately gathered there. These deer became so absorbed in his singing that he reached over and placed a flower garland around the neck of one of them. Then as soon as he stopped singing, all of the deer ran off very quickly. Baijubā-vara said, “If Tanasena is a better singer than me, then he should call all of these deer back with his singing, and once they are again absorbed, he should reach over and retrieve the garland.” Tanasena stood and began singing, and he sang with such effort that he was perspiring heavily, but still the deer didn’t come, and he couldn’t retrieve the garland. Then Baijubāvara sang again, and this time even more deer came and at once again became absorbed in his singing. With one hand he reached over and took back the garland, and then when he stopped singing, all the deer ran off again. In previous times there were singers and musicians like this who could also produce effects like bringing rain or even starting a fire without the use of any matches or other such things. Therefore we can scarcely conceive of the effects Kṛṣṇa’s flute-playing is capable of producing.

After entering the forest, Kṛṣṇa played the flute in such a way that it bewildered everyone, and the clouds saw that, “Our friend has come! We should show some respect to our friend.” Why was there friendship between them? Because they were of the same śyāma colour. The afternoon sun had made the rocks and the soil underfoot very hot, and when Kṛṣṇa played this particular rāga on the flute, wherever the sakhās and cows were standing they became stunned and just listened, and the clouds began to gather in groups. But they didn’t only come for Kṛṣṇa: wherever there were gopas, cows, or calves standing, the clouds desired to render service and they covered the sun with their own bodies like an umbrella. As they rendered this service, it increased their prema, and tears of joy came to their eyes. These

tears took the form of cooling drops of rain, and they fell softly from the sky like an offering of flowers.

The gopīs are saying, “These clouds are so fortunate! We cannot be equal to them; we cannot render even a little service to Kṛṣṇa. No one is as unfortunate as us.” Sādhakas should also feel like this - “Everyone is serving Kṛṣṇa, but I am not.” If a sādhaḥa feels this way, then he will surely make progress in his sādhaṇa. Otherwise, if he sees the faults in others, then all of those faults will in return come within him. Therefore we should never see the faults in other devotees, but should always make an effort to recognise only their good qualities.

*nadyas tadā tad upadhārya mukunda-gītam āvarta-lakṣita-manobhava-  
bhagna-vegāḥ ālīṅgana-sthagitam-ūrmi-bhujair murārer grhṇanti pāda-  
yugalam kamalopahārāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.15 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.111

“O sakhīs, when the rivers of Vṛndāvana headed by the Yamunā hear the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, their currents completely stop, and their waters begin to swirl as if they are overcome with desire. With their arms in the form of waves they reach out to touch and offer lotus flowers to His lotus feet.”

These verses describe the sentiment of elevated devotees, but they may not even come to all elevated devotees; they are exclusively the sentiments of the gopīs. So why have they been given in the Bhāgavatam? These verses are there for the benefit of those sādhaḥas who have a similar type of hankering as the gopīs do. By remembering these verses more and more, some day, in some lifetime, this beautiful bhāva of the gopīs eagerness to meet Kṛṣṇa will enter their hearts. As the gopīs are sitting in their homes, one bhāva arises within them, and then as it diminishes, another immediately arises. This is called bhāva-śābalya, where one bhāva is fully relished and then another comes. The meaning of this verse is that as the gopīs were looking towards the Yamunā, they said, “O sakhī! Hearing the

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flute-song of Mukunda, the river is carrying all the lotuses like gifts in her thousands of arms and offering them as puṣpāṣjali to Kṛṣṇa's feet. The waves of the river have stopped flowing, and a whirlpool has been created. This whirlpool is a symptom of manobhava, the river's prema for Kṛṣṇa."

Who is the husband of the Yamunā, Mānasī-gaṅgā, and the other rivers of Vraja? The ocean, because they all flow towards him. But these rivers don't flow easily towards their husband. The best of these rivers is the one who is the dearest to Bhagavān: Kālindī, she who springs forth from the Kālinda Mountain. Kālindī is the one whose water, from receiving Kṛṣṇa's touch or from the anjana of the gopīs, has assumed Kṛṣṇa's śyāma colour. Having had her heart stolen by the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, the waves of her bhāva were like her hands, and taking a gift of lotuses - kamalopahārāḥ - in these hands, she offered them to the feet of Kṛṣṇa. Kamalopahārāḥ can also mean Lakṣmī, which means splendour. What is the splendour of a river? The lotus; so it can also mean taking that splendour and offering it to Kṛṣṇa's feet. The waves have been said to be Kālindī's long, long arms, and there were not just two of these arms, but thousands and thousands of waves surrounding Kṛṣṇa's feet. Why? For grasping His feet so He wouldn't be able to go away from there. In this way, after offering a gift of all her splendour - the lotuses - she submerged Kṛṣṇa's feet in her waves as if grasping them, thereby placing them in her heart.

The gopīs are saying, "How can we go and grasp the feet of Kṛṣṇa in this way? We are very afraid of being disgraced in society, and therefore we cannot go. We are unable to abandon our present circumstances to meet with Kṛṣṇa. But this river is indicating to us, ...You are unable to do what I have done? Being attracted by Kṛṣṇa's flute you are not able to leave everything - as I have stopped flowing towards my husband, the ocean - and place all of your splendour at His feet? You do not have that much courage? You are so afraid of being disgraced in society? But we are unable to do it, and therefore if there is anyone in this world who is unfortunate, it is us. Having taken birth in these circumstances, we are unable to meet Kṛṣṇa, to

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speak with Him, or to serve Him, because we are always busy in our household affairs. But this river has abandoned everything, even its fierce flow, and embraced the feet of Kṛṣṇa.”

It is the same for us; we are unable to engage in sādhana-bhajana. In the same way as the river offered the gift of lotuses to Kṛṣṇa’s feet, we should offer our very hearts to guru and the Vaiṣṇavas. We may have everything - the association of guru and the Vaiṣṇavas - but as yet we have no such eagerness by which we can turn the tendency of our minds away from material enjoyment and exclusively towards Kṛṣṇa. This is the message being carried by the river, and the instruction being given here through the medium of the gopīs.

Next comes this verse:

*vana-latās tarava ātmani viṣṇum vyaśjayantya iva puṣpa-phalāḍhyāḥ  
praṇata-bhāra-viṭapā madhu-dhārāḥ prema-hṛṣṭa-tanavo vavṛṣuḥ sma*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.35.9 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.112

“Look how the creepers and the branches of the trees of Vṛndāvana are drooping down due to their weight! They must have also taken Śrī Kṛṣṇa within their hearts, because tears of love in the form of streams of honey are dripping from them, and the emergence of their fruits and flowers bear witness to their ecstatic rapture.”

The previous verses were all from the Veṇu-gīta of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, but this verse is from the Yugala-gīta. What is the meaning of the Yugala-gīta? The gopīs are singing to each other concerning their separation from Kṛṣṇa. In the Veṇu-gīta there was more pūrva-rāga (preliminary attraction), but here, after meeting with Kṛṣṇa, they are speaking about their agitated state of vipralambha-bhāva. One who has such eagerness as the gopīs are expressing here will be able to meet Kṛṣṇa and His dearest ones.

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The system for spiritual enlightenment is arranged by Kṛṣṇa alone. Here someone may ask, “There are so many jīvas in the world, so are they all in mādhyura-rasa? There are numerous devotees performing bhajana in the sampradāyas of Nimbārka, Rāmānuja, and Viṣṇusvāmī, and there are others such as yavanas who perform no bhajana at all. Why is it that they don’t all come towards mādhyura-rasa?” The answer is that Bhagavān is so merciful that all the systems in this world are in His hands; according to a person’s particular actions, a certain fruit is bestowed upon them. Every jīva certainly has a particular intrinsic rasa. Five primary sentiments have been described: śānta, dāsyā, sakhyā, vātsalyā, and mādhyura, and every jīva falls within one of these categories. Yet from time immemorial he has been taking birth, dying, sometimes attaining the higher planetary systems and then again returning here, wandering in all directions.

Those who were more fortunate took birth in Satya-yuga, where most people worshipped Bhagavān through śānta-rasa, as the four Kumāras and the Nara-nārāyaṇa ṛṣis did. After this Śrī Rāmacandra came and emphasised the glories of dāsyā-rasa, and for preaching this ideal, Hanumān remained in this world after the disappearance of Rāma. Then Kṛṣṇa came at the end of Dvārāpa-yuga and gave prema even to the creepers. He performed such pastimes that simply by hearing and chanting about them, especially through the medium of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, a jīva could be attracted and gradually attain that bhāva. But there were some jīvas who were contemporary with Kṛṣṇa yet could not understand His līlā. Śiṣupāla, Kaṁsa, Duṣṣāsana, and Jarāsandha criticised this bhāva: “Oh, in Vraja this boy of no particular caste has appeared, no one even knows for sure who His real mother and father are, and now He has become a king in Dvārakā and will rule over us?”

In the Bhāgavatam it is stated that Kṛṣṇa is Svayam Bhagavān, and all bhāvas are included in Him, yet the bhāva He showed in Vraja was not shown anywhere else. But very few people outside of Vraja actually accepted that bhāva at that time and just criticised Him for it. For this reason Kṛṣṇa

inspired Śukadeva Gosvāmī: “You please manifest the shining sun of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. No one else is capable; you are līlā-śuka, and you know all of Our līlā.” Then on the pretext of Parīkṣit Mahārāja being cursed to die by the bite of a snakebird, the Bhāgavatam was manifest by Śukadeva Gosvāmī; but at that time very few people were actually qualified to accept it. Then Śaṅkarācārya came, then Madhva, then Rāmānuja, and other ācāryas came and gave dāsya-rasa, and maybe a little sakhya-rasa. Finally Caitanya Mahāprabhu came with His eternal associates, and through the medium of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam validated that special vraja-bhāva and gave prema to the world. Meeting the incarnation of Bhagavān who goes by the name Vrajendra-nandana is the ideal which is being described in these verses from the Bhāgavatam.

The gopīs, being extremely agitated to meet Kṛṣṇa, have even forgotten their own bodies. Which Kṛṣṇa are they desiring? Sakhā-Kṛṣṇa, the Kṛṣṇa who is so dear to them. If anyone becomes similarly agitated to have Kṛṣṇa as their own friend, son, or dear one, and goes to an elevated devotee and hears kṛṣṇa-kathā from him, then easily he can attain kṛṣṇa-prema. Otherwise there is no way to attain it; Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself came and showed the way. And who was accompanying Him? Svarūpa Dāmodara, Rāya Rāmānanda, and Rūpa, Sanātana, and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmīs. He bestowed all of His mercy on Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rāya Rāmānanda by relishing kathā with them night after night, but He invested His śakti directly into the hearts of Rūpa at Prayāga and Sanātana at Vārāṇasī. Through them this bhāva was manifest in the world, and everyone was drowned in the ocean of bhakti-rasa. Before the appearance of Mahāprabhu these things were not known; no one could even imagine them. Whenever Mahāprabhu saw a forest, He considered it to be Vṛndāvana, whenever He saw a body of water, He took it to be the Kālindī, and whenever He saw any elevated land, He took it to be Govardhana. This is the bhāva of an uttama-adhikārī.

So in this verse the gopīs are saying, “Aho! Kṛṣṇa has continued on His way playing the flute, and it seems that all of the trees, creepers, and mountains



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of Vṛndāvana are revealing their hearts to Him. The creepers have very large flowers and the trees have very large fruits, and it seems that upon seeing Kṛṣṇa they have begun laughing in great ecstasy. The prema within them has manifested externally in the form of their ripening fruits and blossoming flowers. And when Kṛṣṇa passes by them, those trees and creepers bend over, and those fruits and flowers which are normally at the height of His head are offered to His feet as puṣpāṣjali. And expressing their prema for Him, there is an incessant flow of streams of honey emanating from them. But we are so unfortunate; we are unable to meet Kṛṣṇa. These creepers and trees have so much prema for Kṛṣṇa in their hearts, and it is manifesting in the form of all the fruits and flowers and streams of honey, which are like tears flowing from their eyes. But can we take any fruits and flowers to Kṛṣṇa? What would people say? Because of our fear of being disgraced in society we are unable to go. But maybe if in our next lives we assume the form of trees and creepers, then we will also be able to serve Kṛṣṇa.”

## Chapter Five

### Happiness in Separation

In appearance the trees and creepers of Vṛndāvana seem to be ordinary, but upon seeing Kṛṣṇa they became overwhelmed in bhāva. With great joy they offered praṇāma to the feet of Kṛṣṇa by offering their fruits and flowers, and they shed tears of love in the form of streams of honey. Even the plants and trees of this world have feelings; like us they are conscious. They are not able to express their feelings in words, but they can express them. Especially the trees and creepers of Vṛndāvana are all viśuddha-sattva, meaning that they are superior to those of us situated in mixed goodness. So what won't they understand? They can understand and experience everything. Therefore by offering their fruits and flowers in ecstatic rapture, they offered praṇāma to Kṛṣṇa.

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In his commentary, Sanātana Gosvāmī is saying that these trees and creepers are more conscious than the clouds. The gopīs felt that all the other residents of Vṛndāvana were serving Kṛṣṇa, but that they themselves were not. They saw that even the clouds were serving Him by creating an umbrella above His head to block out the sun, and by showering cooling rain on Him. So the trees and creepers were even more conscious than the clouds, and we can see their condition upon hearing the vibration of Kṛṣṇa's flute and receiving His darśana! Concerning Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura wrote:

*paśu pākhī jhure, pāṣāṇa vidare, śuni jāra guṇa-gāthā*

Upon witnessing the līlā of Mahāprabhu, the birds, animals, and insects would melt in divine love. When Mahāprabhu was in Alālanātha, upon hearing His crying the stone there melted, and His footprints and imprints from where He fell unconscious were easily indented there. When Śrī Rāmacandra and Bharata met at Citrakota, upon feeling the mutual love of the two brothers, the stone there melted. When Kṛṣṇa played the flute at Caraṇapahārī at Kāmyavana, the stone melted and He left fifty or more footprints there. These footprints are certainly His - they were not made by anyone else. So even stones, clouds, trees, and animals can melt in emotion, but we have not yet become melted in emotion. We haven't yet developed the intense eagerness that "I will certainly engage in kṛṣṇa-bhajana."

In the verse we began describing in the last chapter we find the line "vana-latās tarava" meaning "the creepers and trees in the forest," but why have the creepers been mentioned before the trees? It would seem that it would be proper to mention the trees first because they are primary, and without them the creepers would have nothing to climb up. But the creepers are of the same gender as the gopīs, and their sentiment is similar. "These creepers are female just as we are, and men don't have as much sentiment as we do." Thinking like this, the gopīs first mentioned the word ...latā in this verse, and then ...tarava . They say "ātmani viṣṇuṁ," which means He who

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is pervading everything, referring to bhakta-vātsalya Bhagavān. ...

Vyaṣṭyanta means revealed in a special way to this Nanda-kīśora, Yaśodā-nandana, Kṛṣṇacandra, or Gopī-kānta. These creepers had a treasure hidden in their hearts, but upon hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute they immediately revealed it in the form of fruits and flowers. Bowing down to Kṛṣṇa's feet, they offered the treasure of their hearts as praṇāma.

There are two ways of offering praṇāma to someone. Someone who has very little faith will apathetically offer praṇāma with his hands only one time and then leave. But someone who has strong faith will bow down and offer praṇāma time and again with great love and humility. He will look towards his master with great affection, desiring his blessing. The trees offered praṇāma to Kṛṣṇa in this way, with great prema. Kṛṣṇa came, they offered praṇāma, and even after Kṛṣṇa left they remained bowing down because there was so much prema in their hearts.

Being submerged in the ocean of unhappiness of separation from Kṛṣṇa, how did the gopīs pass the day? After cooking for Kṛṣṇa at the home of Yaśodā and seeing that Kṛṣṇa has taken the cows to the forest to graze, the gopīs return to their homes, and those sakhīs who are sva-pakṣa (belonging to Rādhikā's own group) remain with Rādhikā. When someone is happy, it seems to them that the whole day passes in one minute; so in separation from Kṛṣṇa, how will the gopīs manage to pass the day? It says here that they engaged in kīrtana - singing these verses which we are reading - but did they pass the day in happiness or unhappiness? They were remembering the līlā of Kṛṣṇa by describing it, and were revealing their inner feelings to one another, but were they feeling happiness or unhappiness? Hearing the descriptions of His līlā, they became absorbed and felt that they were actually seeing Him, but when the excitement from that diminished, they were plunged into the depths of despair.

For the gopīs, happiness and unhappiness became one ocean. It says in the Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, "viṣāṁṛta ekatra milana" - poison and nectar

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became one. I am not able to explain this in such a way that you will understand this, or even to fully understand it myself. Because we are presently standing on the platform of māyā, wrapped up in material enjoyment, we cannot understand this. Then why are we hearing of it? It is like a coating of wax. If you are placing candles here and there, then a little wax comes off on your hand and creates a coating. Similarly, if a sādḥaka reads, hears, and speaks about these topics, then certainly something will rub off: a little feeling of bhāva will come. Then practicing sādhana more and more, after some time this feeling will become so strong that it will never be interrupted.

Here the gopīs are mutually hearing and describing līlā-kathā, and as remembrance comes, they are seeing Kṛṣṇa with the eyes of bhāva. It appears that they are suffering due to separation, but inside them is great happiness.

*evam vraja-striyo rājan kṛṣṇa-līlānugāyatīḥ remire haṁsu tac-cittās tan-  
manaskā mahodayāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg.  
10.35.26

“O king, during the daytime the ladies of Vraja took pleasure in continuously singing about the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, and their hearts were fully absorbed in Him.”

The ladies of Vraja had offered their hearts to Kṛṣṇa. We see in the Vana-vihāra-gīta and in the Veṇu-gīta that the gopīs are absorbed in supreme ānanda: even in separation from Him they remain happy by meditating on His pastimes. Yet in another place it is written that being very unhappy, they passed the day singing about His līlā. They took shelter of only one thing - singing about Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes - otherwise they would have been unable to pass the day. So are the gopīs happy as they sing about His pastimes, or unhappy? It is harmonised in this way: if we see a person really crying and wailing in separation from Kṛṣṇa, just as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did, what

feelings will arise within us? Will we think that, “I never want to be like this!”? Rather we will think that if even a small fraction of that bhāva enters us, our lives will be completely successful. As peculiar as it seems, we actually desire to cry in this way. The verses in the Bhāgavatam describing the crying of the gopīs will be those most read by a rasika devotee. In the Bhramara-gīta the gopīs are in vipralambha-bhāva, and speaking to a bumble-bee they are expressing their suffering. It is a very sad thing, but devotees enjoy it very much.

The Veṇu-gīta, Gopī-gīta, Yugala-gīta, and other chapters in the Bhāgavatam all focus entirely on the topic of separation from Kṛṣṇa. Devotees find all of this tasteful, even though they are crying; they like crying also. Therefore here happiness is included within crying, and the gopīs are described in this verse as mahodayāḥ - experiencing a grand festival. Singing about Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes during the day they were supremely happy. Meeting Kṛṣṇa at night they were fully gratified, and in meditation during the day their minds raced after Him as He wandered in the forest. This is the meaning of bhajana. If a devotee is absorbed in meditation on kṛṣṇa-līlā, then that meditation is bhajana. “How will I meet Kṛṣṇa? So many lives have passed, and still I have not found Him.”

Although externally that prema appears to be unhappiness, inside their meditation is immeasurable happiness. When Kṛṣṇa leaves Vṛndāvana and goes to Mathurā or Dvārakā, and at Nandagrāma or Uddhava-kyārī the gopīs are crying in sadness, why won’t they abandon their meditation on Kṛṣṇa? Are they able to abandon it? Sūrya dāsa has written that the gopīs placed Kṛṣṇa’s foot-dust all over their sārīs and their limbs, and when the tears related to Kṛṣṇa fell from their eyes and mixed with that, they became very dirty; but would any of them change their sārīs? So this meditation is actually full of happiness, but yes, externally it seems to be unhappiness. It is written in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta that the happiness felt by one person meeting Kṛṣṇa exceeds the happiness felt by the residents of millions of material universes combined, and the unhappiness felt by the residents of Vṛndāvana

exceeds the pain caused by the most potent poison. Therefore Sanātana Gosvāmī, Jīva Gosvāmī, and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura have written in their commentaries that in this state of separation, happiness and unhappiness are the same.

At the end of his explanation of this verse, Sanātana Gosvāmī says that in this way Kṛṣṇa is the very embodiment of paramānanda: He is the svarūpa of rasa, He is sarva-śaktimān, He is all-pervading, He knows the minds and hearts of all, and He is the foundation of all rasa. He is both the rasa itself and the taster of rasa. He performs pastimes which establish Him as the very embodiment of paramānanda. There is no difference between Kṛṣṇa and His līlā, just as there is no difference between Kṛṣṇa and His name. Being merciful, when līlā sees that there is bhāva in our hearts, then it will appear to us. By thousands of our own efforts it will not appear, but when it is merciful to us, at that moment it will appear of its own accord.

Just as Kṛṣṇa is supremely independent, His līlā is also supremely independent. It will know if a recipient is qualified or not. If it sees that one's prayer is full of humility, then no matter what one's qualification may be, it will appear. It may appear in the hearts of qualified people like the four Kumāras, or in someone with a sinful background like Bilvamaṅgala. Līlā manifested in his heart and Kṛṣṇa Himself came to help him walk to Vraja and to listen to his sweet singing. Therefore Sanātana Gosvāmī is saying that just as Kṛṣṇa is the very embodiment of paramānanda, so is His līlā. If one is simply hearing narrations of kṛṣṇa-līlā, then for him there is no necessity of vairāgya or anything of the kind.

*jṣāne prayāsam udapāsyā namanta eva  
jīvanti san-mukharitām bhavadīya-vārtām  
sthāne sthitāḥ śruti-gatām tanu-vān-manobhir  
ye prāyaśo jita jito py asi tais tri-lokyām*

Bhagavān is unconquerable by anyone within this world. Yet if someone faithfully hears hari-kathā, even while remaining within his established social position, then the disease of lust and all anarthas will vanish from his heart and he will overpower that unconquerable Bhagavān - such is the potency of līlā-kathā. But since this līlā-kathā is paramānanda-svarūpa, then what necessity will the gopīs feel to meet Kṛṣṇa? Won't they be satisfied just by this? They won't be satisfied. Why? Sanātana Gosvāmī gives his opinion that although Kṛṣṇa and līlā-kathā are one, the gopīs won't be satisfied by just engaging in līlā-kathā. Their prema is such that it can never be restricted in any way, and they will never be fully pleased, fully satisfied, or receive the full ruci from only engaging in līlā-kathā without meeting Kṛṣṇa. They desire to enter directly into the līlā where Kṛṣṇa will express similar sentiments towards them as He did in the rāsa-līlā.

Hari-kathā by itself won't satisfy the gopīs, but a sādḥaka should always continue hearing hari-kathā, understanding that the unhappiness which the gopīs experienced while engaged in hari-kathā was merely a manifestation of their indescribable happiness. It is written that when līlā-kathā enters the ears of a sādḥaka, it enters his heart, snatches away all inauspiciousness, and makes his heart completely pure. Then it takes him to the place where he can relish a life of serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa with the sakhās and sakhīs; in this way Kṛṣṇa and His līlā-kathā are supremely merciful.

Next comes this verse:

*ete linas tava yaśo khila-loka-tīrthaṁgāyanta ādi-puruṣānupatham  
bhajanteprāyo amī muni-gaṇā bhavadīya-mukhyāgūḍham vane pi na jahaty  
anaghātma-daivam*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.6 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.113

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Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma, “Hey Ādi-puruṣa! Although You are keeping Your opulences hidden and are performing pastimes as a young boy here in Vṛndāvan, still the munis, who are among the best of Your devotees, have recognised You. Not wanting to be separated from You for even one moment, they have assumed the forms of bees and are worshipping You by constantly singing Your glories as the purifier of this world.”

Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva Prabhu have taken the cows out for grazing, and using the presence of Baladeva as a pretext, Kṛṣṇa is actually praising Himself in His speaking of this verse. Here He praises Baladeva as being ...ādi-puruṣa , but that is actually Kṛṣṇa Himself. He is describing so many of the glories of Baladeva here, but they are actually His own glories. He says, “The buzzing of the bees in this forest is actually the chanting of Vedic mantras. The bees are actually munis, but in the form of bees they are glorifying You with poems and prayers as they follow You along. You are wearing a vaijayantī-mālā which is comprised of many different kinds of flowers and tulasī maṣjarīs also. There is nectar within these maṣjarīs, so sometimes these bees are sitting on the maṣjarīs, sometimes on the other flowers of the garland, and sometimes they are swarming around You offering prayers. They are actually munis who after performing austerities for thousands of years have attained perfection. Being munis they are able to discern that You are actually the ādi-puruṣa, even though You remain hidden in Your form as a young boy at the conjunction of the paugaṇḍa and kiśora ages. Therefore they are unable to abandon Your company and are following behind You offering prayers.”

What is the nature of their prayers? There are so many different kinds of poems and prayers that can be offered to Kṛṣṇa, but amongst them, which are the topmost? There are countless mantras within the Vedas, and their personifications pray, “Although we are the mantras of the Vedas, up until today we have been performing austerities for the purpose of attaining and becoming absorbed in the bhāva which You share with the gopīs. Please be kind and make that bhāva arise within our hearts.” There are so many types



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of prayers one can offer to Kṛṣṇa, but if someone prays for the bhāva of Vraja, then He is more pleased. And especially if someone prays for the bhāva of the gopīs, that will please Him the most.

Grandfather Bhīṣma prayed, “O Prabhu, out of friendship You are driving the chariot of Arjuna, and Your blood is flowing from the wounds made by my arrows. At this time I remember You in Vṛndāvana as Your soft body may have been pricked by thorns, and blood is coming from those wounds. Seeing You in this condition, that bhāva is coming to me.” In Vraja, Kṛṣṇa’s skin may have been pricked as He was playing with the sakhās, but really Bhīṣma is remembering Kṛṣṇa with His skin having been scratched by the gopīs in their amorous pastimes. In describing that bhāva, Sanātana Gosvāmī has quoted that verse here in his commentary and given a very beautiful explanation. This kind of prayer is the topmost. If we pray, “O Prabhu, Yaśodā has scolded You and You are crying. I offer praṇāma to You in this condition time and again,” then Kṛṣṇa will be pleased. But above that, if we pray, “O Prabhu, You are very rasika. In Vṛndāvana, when the gopīs are fatigued, You massage their feet and appease them. I offer praṇāma to You time and again,” then there will be no need to say anything more. Being very pleased, Kṛṣṇa will give Himself to someone who offers such a prayer. He is more pleased by those who pray with this elevated bhāva than He was even by the prayers of Brahmā.

The descriptions of Kṛṣṇa’s līlā are referred to here as akhila-loka-tīrthaṁ - they are the saviour and purifier of the entire world. One may be purified by repeatedly bathing in tīrthas, holy places, but hearing hari-kathā from an elevated devotee will purify one for all time, and make one qualified to purify others as well. Acting as guru, this līlā-kathā is the purifier of everyone whether they are qualified or not by other considerations. It is the bestower of the knowledge of Bhagavān’s glories, and the very thing that takes us across the ocean of material existence. Singing about Bhagavān’s līlā will purify oneself and the entire world also.

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Holy places become very contaminated and even begin to desire that sinful people will not bathe in their waters, but if someone hears hari-kathā from Nārada, will Nārada ever become contaminated? Whoever asks him questions and whoever hears his answers will become purified. He is always singing the līlā-kathā of Bhagavān, and sometimes even creates some pastimes himself, such as when he went to Dvārakā accompanied by Uddhava and the construction of Nava-vṛndāvana was arranged. He inspires many different kinds of pastimes, and then he sings about them. No one knows the glories of līlā-kathā better than Nārada. If anyone hears and chants such descriptions, especially the descriptions of līlā found in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, then certainly Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by His associates, will appear in that person's heart.

## Chapter Six

### The Gopīs Desire to Become Birds and Deer

After telling the story of Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, Sanātana Gosvāmī is giving us some rasāyana, some nectar- tonic which is especially for those who have been freed from the disease, but who are still a little weak. By taking this medicine for some time, the body will again become strong, meaning that one will be able to progress in sādhanā and one's prema-bhakti will become steadfast. First he treated our disease, but just curing the disease is not everything because one still remains weak. After one's śraddhā has increased and transformed into niṣṭhā, progressing from there he will face many, many anarthas. This nectar- tonic is especially intended for those at this stage. If in a regulated manner one hears these final verses and then deeply meditates on them, his love for Bhagavān will surely increase. But if after hearing these verses one doesn't meditate on them, then at the time of taking harināma his mind will certainly be absorbed in thoughts of material enjoyment. While chanting his mind will be unsteady, and remembrance of events from the life he led before he began to follow the

path of bhakti will awaken inside him. Various kinds of saṅkalpa and vikalpa, attraction and repulsion to material objects, will come to his mind, and he won't receive the full benefit from this nectar-tonic. But if someone meditates on these verses while taking harināma, then his bhakti will surely increase. This is the method for increasing one's bhakti.

While we are dreaming, those things which occupied our minds and which we meditated on time and again while awake come to our vision. Sometimes things which are completely unrelated appear in our dream; it is all scrambled and there is not even any realistic continuity. If our minds are not controlled, then it will be the same when we take harināma. For a certain amount of time each day we all hear some hari-kathā, but now consider what you are doing for all your remaining waking hours. If we fully meditate on Bhagavān during those remaining hours, then at all times the mind will remain absorbed in Him.

The focus of our minds will be determined by what we think about during our waking hours. If for those hours the mind is pondering over sense enjoyment, such as what arrangements we have made for eating and drinking and how we will solve all of our worldly problems - then how will we be able to steadily think of Bhagavān? Will our minds remain steady while chanting from our daily hearing of perhaps only one hour of hari-kathā? It will certainly be absorbed in what we have thought about during most of our waking hours, and even while sleeping we will remember those same things. But if one remains in sādhu-saṅga and during all his waking hours applies his mind to hearing hari-kathā, reading the śāstra, engaging in bhagavat-sevā, and doesn't worry about any other problems, then his mind will remain steady. Therefore the sādhaka who wants to elevate his mind should meditate on the pastimes described in these verses while taking harināma. We should make this effort, pushing away the thoughts of experiencing sense enjoyment and collecting good quality possessions, and gradually, in due course, our minds will remain steady in meditation on Bhagavān's līlā.

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For this purpose the līlā of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is supremely merciful and generous. When Mahāprabhu was in South India He met with Rāya Rāmānanda, and their conversation, the Rāmānanda-samvāda, is unanimously appreciated by all the topmost devotees in this world. If you read it you will see why. There, with each śloka they are unveiling the deepest of secrets, and while reading it, your heart will become so spellbound that you won't want to put it down. Therefore while taking harināma, we should meditate on these types of narrations from the śāstra. But if we are inattentive while taking harināma, we will not be benefited. We should first try to attain niṣṭhā, and then ruci will come. After that āsakti will come, and we should try to transform that into bhāva. In the līlā-kathā that we are hearing here from Sanātana Gosvāmī, there are instructions for all levels of devotees. Those on the level of śraddhā will understand these verses in a particular way, and those who have niṣṭhā will understand them in a different way. Those in āsakti will understand them in a certain way, and those who are in bhāva will understand them in yet another way.

Speaking amongst themselves, the gopīs said that when all the plants, creepers, and trees of Vṛndāvana were trembling in the breeze, it was as if they were experiencing ecstatic symptoms, and that they were drooping down solely to offer their everything to Kṛṣṇa as He passed by. A sādḥaka should also try to offer his everything to Kṛṣṇa, and when he does, then it can be said that he is really engaged in sādḥana. Then the gopīs remembered how the bees would sit on Kṛṣṇa's garland of forest flowers and not leave Him, and how they would sometimes swarm around Him offering prayers.

Next the gopīs describe how the birds are even more elevated, and how they reacted to the sweet melody emanating from Kṛṣṇa's flute. There are birds such as peacocks, parrots, pigeons, and koels which live on land, but first they describe the birds which reside on water:

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*sarasi sārasa-hamṣa-vihaṅgāś  
cāru-gīta-hṛta-cetasa etya  
harim upāsata te yata-cittā  
hanta mīlita-dṛśo dhṛta-maunāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.35.11 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.114

The gopīs said, “It is very astonishing that Kṛṣṇa steals away the hearts of the swans, cranes, and other water-birds in such a way that they approach Him, sit down and worship Him with their eyes closed, and fully concentrate their minds on Him.”

In this verse from the Yugala-gīta, the gopīs are saying, “Forget those bees; more intelligent than them are these birds who reside on the water.” When Kṛṣṇa arrived in the forest, what astonishing thing happened? ...Hanta means amazed, and being wonderstruck the gopīs are now marvelling at seeing these birds. “When the cranes and swans on the pond heard the beautiful song Kṛṣṇa was playing on His flute, they became completely spellbound! Through the medium of their ears they held Kṛṣṇa within their hearts. Ordinarily, when they see someone, they immediately flee; but instead they quickly came near to worship Kṛṣṇa.” ...Upāsata means worshipping with the mind, body, and words all at once. As long as a jīva is conditioned, he is not capable of performing real upāsana. He can only be endeavouring for upāsana, because it means being near Bhagavān, in His personal presence. When we offer pūjā to the Deity it is called upāsana, but is it really upāsana? Where is the Deity, and where are we? We are conditioned souls, and He is all-pervading, the solidified form of saccidānanda. Therefore we are not able to really be near Him, but when our hearts are pure enough and we attain a spiritual form, then we can go near Him and it can be called upāsana. But as long as we are conditioned souls full of anarthas, we cannot really offer Him arcana.

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So from far away these birds approached Kṛṣṇa with ...yata-cittā - their minds fully controlled, but in our present condition our minds are not controlled. In meditation, there are the stages of yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, dhyāna, dhruvāsmṛti, and finally samādhi, and when one has achieved this state, then his meditation can be called real upāsana. So when those birds heard Kṛṣṇa playing the flute and saw His exquisite form, they became yata-cittā - fully self-controlled. This is one symptom of a sādhu, and two more are described in this verse: mīlita-dṛśo - they closed their eyes, and dhṛta-maunāḥ - they became silent. Ordinarily they were always making their chirping sounds, but instead they became silent.

Speech is the cause of so many faults. If someone speaks in a deceptive or unbeneficial manner, his mind will be contaminated and therefore become restless. But if one's speech is controlled, then he will never offend any Vaiṣṇava. Fighting and quarrelling - uncontrolled speech is the cause of all this. Therefore in the Upadeśāmṛta the first of all instructions given to us is vāco-vegama - our speech must be controlled. So here it says dhṛta-maunāḥ - the tongues of the water-birds which ordinarily make so many sounds at once became silent. If someone desires to engage in bhajana, then they should practice silence, which means not speaking anything besides kṛṣṇa-nāma or kṛṣṇa-kathā. Then it will really be sādhana-bhajana. And also mīlita-dṛśo - those birds closed their eyes. They took a look at Kṛṣṇa and then immediately closed their eyes: what does that mean? Through the medium of their eyes they took Kṛṣṇa into their hearts, and then they had no desire to see any worldly object. And yata-cittā: remaining silent with their eyes closed, their minds became fully controlled. From looking here and there and speaking in an unregulated manner, one's mind becomes restless. For this reason Bilvamaṅgala plucked out both of his eyes and became silent except for speaking kṛṣṇa-kathā; but without harming our eyes or tongue we should simply control them, and then automatically our mind will become controlled.

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Here the gopīs are saying, “This is a very astonishing thing! These birds who ordinarily chirp day and night have today become silent, and closing their eyes they have taken Kṛṣṇa into their hearts. Now automatically their minds have become controlled, and they have no remaining desire in this world.” If someone desires to engage in bhajana, then they must be like this. This instruction is for all levels of devotees, and according to one’s level one will be able to do this. Yet in the Yugalā-gīta we find, “Aho Sakhī! We are unable to do this! Day and night our minds are restless. We are not able to keep our eyes closed, and we are also constantly conversing; we are unable to remain silent. The swans and cranes can go near to Kṛṣṇa and receive His direct darśana, but we cannot get such a good opportunity. They are certainly of a higher class than us.” This is the gopīs uttama-adhikārī vision: even though their eyes remain open solely because they are always searching for Kṛṣṇa, and even though they are unable to remain silent solely because they are always speaking about Kṛṣṇa, they are considering everyone else to be more fortunate than themselves, and they are taking instruction from everything and everyone.

Sanātana Gosvāmī also gives another meaning to this verse being discussed. These birds, being attracted by the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, came near Him, but then they too could not remain silent. Very softly they chanted, “Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa.” And although they closed their eyes, their minds could not be controlled because waves of ecstasy were flowing inside them. When Kṛṣṇa attracted the gopīs in the night by playing the flute, they stood before Him silently. Some of them may have even closed their eyes, but does that mean that their minds were peaceful? On the contrary countless varieties of bhāva were churning in their hearts! If anyone goes near Kṛṣṇa, will they be able to remain silent? All the time they will be singing either kṛṣṇa-kathā or kṛṣṇa-nāma - and will they be able to keep their eyes closed? They will be looking here and there to find the place from which the hypnotic flute sound has come. And will their minds remain steady? Their minds will certainly become even more restless in a state of divine ecstasy!

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*prāyo batāmba vihaḡā munayo vane smin kṛṣṇekṣita-m tad-uditam kala-  
veṇu-gītam āruhya ye druma-bhujān rucira-pravālān śṛṇvanti mīlita-dṛśo  
vigatānya-vācaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.14 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.115

“O friend, the birds of Vṛndāvana are actually sages. They have taken positions on the branches of trees which have new and fresh leaves from where they can easily have darśana of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sitting there and hearing the sweet vibration of His flute, they close their eyes and become immersed in divine bliss.”

Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva were decorated as if They were dancing actors entering an arena to give a performance. They were adorned with forest flowers and jumped about like young deer. This verse says “vigatānya-vacāḥ” - the birds became silent - which corresponds to what was mentioned in the previous verse. Kṛṣṇa played the flute very beautifully, and at once all the peacocks gathered together. They were sitting in the kadamba trees at the top of the mountain, but at once they came down to the meadow to be near Kṛṣṇa. Then so many different varieties of birds came near and watched as Kṛṣṇa was playing the flute and the peacocks were dancing. At that time, seeing through the eyes of bhāva, the gopīs spoke this verse. In great astonishment they said “prāyo batāmba”. ...Amba generally means mother, but does that mean they were speaking to Yaśodā? Will all of these sentiments come to them when they are before Mother Yaśodā? No, that bhāva would be constrained. The sentiments of vātsalya and mādhyura are completely opposed to one another, and neither can remain in the other’s presence. So here amba means they are addressing another sakhī. “O Sakhī, the birds of this forest are actually munis because upon hearing the sweet melody Kṛṣṇa is playing on the flute, they have closed their eyes and are simply remaining silent. They have descended to the trees of the meadow



and are sitting on the branches in such a way that there is no obstacle to their seeing Kṛṣṇa, and where Kṛṣṇa can also glance at them affectionately.”

...Druma-bhujān means the branches of trees, and can also refer to the ... tree of the Vedas. The Vedic tree has thousands of long branches, and seated on certain branches according to their classification are karmīs, jñānīs, yogīs, and tapasvīs. The vulture is seated where there are no leaves, and the koel is seated where the mango buds are drooping. Eating these soft buds and leaves, it sings, “ku-hu, ku-hu”. The peacocks mostly sit in the tops of the kadamba trees, and they are very beautiful in appearance and very good dancers. Among the Vedic branches are also seated various kinds of munis. Seated on one branch is Patañjali Ṛṣi, on another is Jaimini Ṛṣi, and on another is Gautama Ṛṣi. But the birds of Vṛndāvana are different from them, and are sitting on which branch of the allegorical Vedic tree? The branch where the fruit which has no pit - the ripened fruit of the Purāṇas and all scriptures - can be found. That ripened fruit is the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and sitting on this branch they can taste the Bhāgavatam, have the darśana of Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa can affectionately glance at them.

So the gopīs are saying, “Certain munis have become birds in Vṛndāvana, and upon hearing the beautiful melody from Kṛṣṇa’s flute, these munis have become silent and are sitting quietly with controlled minds. Just see how fortunate they are, and how unfortunate we are. Being birds they can hear the melody of Kṛṣṇa’s flute and approach Him and feel so much ānanda, but we can’t listen to His flute or go near Him. If we could become koels or parrots or any other bird and go to hear Kṛṣṇa playing the flute at Govardhana and see the peacocks dancing, then our lives would be meaningful.”

*dhanyāḥ sma mūḍha-gatayo pi hariṇya etā yā nanda-nandanam upātta-  
vicitra-veśam ākarṇya veṇu-raṇitam saha-kṛṣṇa-sārāḥ pūjām dadhur  
viracitām praṇayāvalokaiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.11 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.116

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“These ignorant deer are also fortunate, because accompanied by their husbands they are standing motionlessly and listening to the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute. It is as if they are offering pūjā to the gorgeously attired son of Nanda with their loving glances.”

The gopīs meditation became diverted, and again their internal vision was directed towards another group of living entities. They classified the bees as more fortunate than themselves, the swans and cranes as superior to the bees, the birds who reside on land as more fortunate than the water-birds, and the deer as superior to the birds. “Most fortunate of all are these deer, because not only have they at once approached Kṛṣṇa, and not only have they received His loving glance with their eager eyes - but in their exchange of glances was the most affection.” ...Mūḍha-gatayo : people call deer foolish. Because the deer easily fall into traps, they are considered foolish as a species. With some simple allurements they can be easily captured. We have heard that sometimes hunters have someone play a flute very sweetly, and being attracted the deer come near and fall into a trap. But the gopīs say, “We don’t consider the deer to be foolish at all! Hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute and seeing His gorgeous dress, they have approached Him.” ... Upātta-vicitra-veśam means Kṛṣṇa is decorated with forest flowers and leaves such as the fragrant mango leaf. He is adorned with red powder in various places and has the designs of spiders drawn on His cheeks, and upon the body of Govardhana He appears more beautiful than millions of ornaments. ...Saha-kṛṣṇa-sārāḥ means the female deer were searching here and there for Kṛṣṇa, and their husbands were following behind them to protect them. “Pūjām dadhur viracitām praṇayāvalokaiḥ” means that they gazed towards Kṛṣṇa’s beautiful face with great love, and it was as if they were offering pūjā to Him with their sidelong glances. Upon seeing this, and how affectionately Kṛṣṇa also glanced at them - seeing how much mutual love there was between them, the gopīs said, “They have received such a wonderful opportunity, but where is such an opportunity for us? Can we approach Kṛṣṇa and offer arcana to Him with our eyes? We are not so

fortunate. If after leaving these bodies we could become female deer, then we could receive such an opportunity and our lives would be meaningful.”

## Chapter Seven

### The Animals of Vraja are Stunned

*gāvaś ca kṛṣṇa-mukha-nirgata-veṇu-gītapīyūṣam uttabhita-karṇa-puṭaiḥ  
pibantyaḥ śāvāḥ snuta-stana-payāḥ-kavalāḥ sma tasthur govindam ātmani  
dṛśāśru-kalāḥ sprśantyaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.13 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.117

“In order to drink the nectarine vibration of the flute-song emanating from the lotus mouth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cows have raised their ears. The grass which they were chewing just remains in their mouths, and milk begins to drip from their udders. The calves at once stop drinking their mothers milk, and as they embrace Kṛṣṇa within their hearts, tears of love begin to glide down their faces.”

The gopīs are conversing about Kṛṣṇa in their homes during the daytime. But we are different; upon awakening in the morning we just begin thinking about how to solve all of our worldly problems. Except for a very few persons, no one has the faith or the free time to take harināma, and even if someone has some faith and time, then we don’t chant in the way we should. Sādhakas should learn from the lives of the gopīs, who upon awakening in the morning begin meditating on Kṛṣṇa, which means that they begin burning in separation from Kṛṣṇa. Then they bathe and decorate themselves - for whom? Only for Kṛṣṇa. The theme of their conversation is: “How can we meet Kṛṣṇa? How can we serve Him?” Then they go to Nandagrāma to receive His darśana and to cook for Him. When Kṛṣṇa goes to the forest for the day, they return to their homes and converse about Him for the remainder of the day. In each group one gopī will be speaking, and so many other gopīs will be listening, and there are thousands of these groups.

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According to their particular natures, they are seated in groups and are singing about Kṛṣṇa's līlā.

We take our mālā and sit to chant, but our minds wander here and there. Then another devotee comes and sits near us, and we begin conversing with him about this or that. We abandon our harināma, and he leaves it also. But the gopīs aren't like this; one gopī says to another, "Aho! From the lotus mouth of Kṛṣṇa the sound of the flute has emerged. It has crossed the entire brahmāṇḍa, crossed Siddhaloka, Vaikuṇṭha, Ayodhyā, Mathurā, and Dvārakā, and has now entered Vṛndāvana. While grazing, the cows hear this hypnotic vibration and at once raise their ears. The melody of Kṛṣṇa's flute is like celestial nectar, and it is as if they are drinking that nectar through their ears. And the grass which they had taken in their mouths moments before is just remaining there! They aren't swallowing it, and it isn't coming back out of their mouths either. They are just standing motionlessly and listening.

"And when the calves who are drinking their mother's milk hear the sound of Kṛṣṇa's flute, the milk which they had drawn out remains in their mouths! Usually it is swallowed immediately, but at that time it just remains in their mouths and then gradually begins to glide down from the corners of their mouths. What to speak of just these cows and calves, all the inhabitants of Vraja have become absorbed in the melody of Kṛṣṇa's flute. But we are not so fortunate. These cows and calves are also shedding tears of prema, and sometimes even the clouds shed tears of prema for Kṛṣṇa as well. But it is our great misfortune that we are so hard-hearted that we don't leave our homes at once and go to where Kṛṣṇa is playing His flute and become equally spellbound. Because we are afraid of being disgraced in society we are holding our patience and not going there, considering that there are too many obstacles. But if someday the sound of the flute really enters our hearts, then at once our patience will fly away and we will immediately run to Kṛṣṇa. If we could give up these bodies right now and take birth as calves, that would be very good! Then whenever we would hear the sound of Kṛṣṇa's

flute, we would go there at once! We would be entirely under His protection, and while gazing at Him we would forget everything else.”

In this way the gopīs are speaking. Just see the nature of their condition, their feelings. For receiving the darśana of Kṛṣṇa and for hearing the melody of His flute, a sādhaka should have such vipralambha-bhāva in his heart, and then he will be engaging in real bhajana. If one’s sādhana is established on knowledge of tattva and he becomes free from the tendencies of karma, jñāna, laziness, madness, criticising other devotees, aparādha, and anarthas, then Bhagavān will not be far away from him. Bhagavān is always just behind us, not far away. Paramātmā and ātmā are always together; they are not separate. Kṛṣṇa and our very souls are together within us, but at present we are not seeing Him because we don’t have sufficient faith.

If a person is crying out from afar, is there any friend or relative who won’t come to his aid? Even if there is a son who has given his mother great difficulty, even to the point of trying to kill her, when he calls out in pain, will his mother not come to his aid? Are there any parents anywhere who could possibly ignore the pleas of their offspring? Perhaps only if they don’t hear them - but Kṛṣṇa is always nearby, and if we call out to Him, will He not hear? He is much more merciful than mere worldly parents. There is no place where He is not; He is always very near us inside our hearts. If we call Him sincerely, is it possible that He won’t hear us? Will Kṛṣṇa not hear if we loudly call out to Him? At present we don’t have sufficient faith, but when we pray from deep within our heart with great faith and tears falling from our eyes, “Gopīnātha! Mama nivedana śuno!” will He not hear it? Certainly He will; otherwise His name would have to be changed. When we have this bhāva, then what we are engaged in can really be called ...bhajana .

*vṛndaśo vraja-vṛṣā mṛga-gāvo veṇu-vādyā-hṛta-cetasa ārāt danta-daṣṭa-  
kavalā dhṛta-karṇā nidritā likhita-citram ivāsan*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.35.5 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.118

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“Hearing the vibration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s flute, the bulls, cows, and deer of Vṛndāvana approach Him. Unable to swallow the grass which they had taken into their mouths, they stand silently with their ears raised and appear like animals in a painting.”

The previous verse is from the Veṇu-gīta, and this verse is from the Yugala-gīta. “Hey Sakhī! Hearing the sound of Kṛṣṇa’s flute and seeing His attractive form, the cows, bulls, and deer of Vraja have become stunned and forgotten everything. They have abruptly stopped grazing and the grass which they were chewing merely remains within their mouths. They have lifted up their tails and raised their ears, trying to discern from which direction that sound has come. When they realise the direction from which it has come, they slowly proceed until they come near to Kṛṣṇa. It is as if the vibration of the flute has entered through their ears, stolen their hearts, and again exited their bodies. Therefore, what can they do? They must follow that sound until they are near Kṛṣṇa, and since their hearts are no longer within them, they appear like motionless animals in a painting. Kṛṣṇa’s flute-song has stolen their hearts, and feeling themselves possessionless they have approached Him as if begging alms.”

...Dhṛta-karṇā : these animals ears generally droop down, but upon hearing the music of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, they raised them. At first they were listening, but then they reflexively turned their ears away from that sound so that it couldn’t enter. Why? They were thinking, “We won’t allow this sound to enter into our hearts, because then it will steal our hearts and may even steal away our very lives! We may die, and therefore we won’t allow this vibration to enter!” Kṛṣṇa’s appearance and the vibration of His flute are like nectar and poison simultaneously - viṣāmrta ekatra-milana. It cannot be discerned whether kṛṣṇa-prema is nectar or poison, just as when ice is placed in our hand, it feels as if it is burning. We can’t tell if our hand is burning or freezing. Similarly, coming in contact with kṛṣṇa-prema, we can’t discern whether we are feeling ānanda or sadness. Saccharin has a bitter taste, but if you mix it with water it becomes sweet. And if you suck on a

gooseberry, at first it seems sour, but when you get the juice it becomes sweet. Like this, externally kṛṣṇa-prema appears to be full of great sadness, and sometimes internally it may even feel something like sadness, but it is really the greatest happiness.

So these cows closed their ears, and when upon opening them a little the vibration of the flute entered, they felt concerned for their very lives. They didn't know whether to accept or reject it. In the same way, some people say, "My friend, there is no need for all of this bhakti. Those who have bhakti actually have no happiness. Even in the stage of sādhana they are crying. They think, ...By going to engage in bhajana I have made all of my family members cry, and I am no longer able to live with them. And look at what the composers of the scriptures have written:

*nayanam galad-aśru-dhārayā*  
*vadanam gadgada-ruddhayā girā*  
 pulakair nicitam vapuḥ kadā  
 tava nāma-grahaṇe bhaviṣyati

Śikṣāṣṭ  
 aka 6

"O Prabhu! When will my eyes be filled with a stream of tears? When will my voice choke up? And when will the hairs of my body stand erect in ecstasy as I chant Your holy name?"

"They are praying for the day when they will never stop crying, and they desire to be always wailing in kṛṣṇa-prema. Actually it is not really such a surprising thing that they desire to cry in the stage of sādhana, because without a child crying, his mother will not feed him milk. Alright, so they are crying in the stage of sādhana - but just look, then, at their stage of perfection! Uddhava and Akrūra were perfected souls, and we have heard that when they saw Kṛṣṇa's footprints on the ground they began wailing and even fell down and began writhing on the ground! And until the gopīs met

Kṛṣṇa again at Kurukṣetra, they were always crying. And when they again parted, they cried even more! Even though they were perfected souls! Therefore all of this bhakti is just an unnecessary commotion.”

But to persons who say this we say “yayātmā suprasīdati” (Śrīmad-Bhāg. 1.2.6): bhakti completely satisfies the soul with ānanda. Without engaging in bhajana, no one can be happy. Churning water will never produce ghee. Even if all the people of the universe say that churning water produces ghee, will it happen? Never. And without engaging in hari-bhajana, no one can attain happiness or cross over this ocean of material existence. This point cannot be refuted any more than the fact that the sun will definitely set in the west. This is confirmed in the Vedas, Rāmāyaṇa and all of the Purāṇas and it cannot be refuted.

Meeting with Kṛṣṇa and separation from Him are simultaneously like nectar and poison, and their characteristics cannot be distinguished from one another. They become one and the same thing. Therefore these animals of Vraja become bewildered and concerned for their very lives, while at the same time the gopīs are saying, “In Vraja we are the most unfortunate. Everyone else is becoming filled with bliss by receiving the darśana of Kṛṣṇa, but we must remain here in our homes.”

## Chapter Eight

### The Gopīs Glorify the Pulinda Girl

During the daytime, the gopīs are sitting together in their homes and revealing their inner sentiments to one another. One says, “After leaving this body I desire to take birth as a deer, and then easily I will receive the darśana of Kṛṣṇa.” Another says, “I desire to become a cow or a calf. Who stops them from approaching Kṛṣṇa? Hearing the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute I will approach Him and become spellbound, just as the cows and calves do. In an unrestricted fashion I will receive His darśana.” In this way some gopīs desire to become clouds, and others desire to become bees, birds, or rivers.



Now in this verse from the end of the Veṇu-gīta they will begin to speak about those in human form:

*pūrṇāḥ pulindya urugāya-padābja-rāgaśrī-kuṅkumena dayitā-stana-  
maṇḍitena tad-darśana-smara-rujas tṛṇa-rūṣitena limpantya ānana-kuceṣu  
jahus tad-ādhim*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.17 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.119

“O Sakhī, we consider the Pulinda girls who collect grass and wood to be greatly fortunate, because by spreading the kuṅkuma which lies upon the grass on their faces and bodies, the desires which arise in their hearts from seeing that very kuṅkuma are pacified. In reality, that kuṅkuma is from the breasts of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and at the time of enjoying pastimes with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it becomes smeared on His lotus feet. Then as They wander in the forest, it falls from His feet onto the grass.”

In previous times in Vraja there was a tribe called Pulinda who would construct small huts which they would live in for only a short time and then move on. Their women would collect wood or dry plants and sell them to maintain themselves, or they would bring water for people. They were also artists, so they would travel to peoples homes selling their craftwork. The gopīs are saying, “Aho! All of the living entities we have described so far are certainly fortunate, but this girl of the Pulinda tribe is pūrṇāḥ - completely fortunate. Why? In the morning, arriving in the valleys of Govardhana to collect wood, she notices that kuṅkuma is mixed with the dew on the grass. Seeing this, desire begins to burn in her heart.”

Intense eagerness to meet Kṛṣṇa arose in her heart because remembrance of a previous incident came to her. The day before, in a kuṣja of Govardhana, Kṛṣṇa and His friends were playing dice with the gopīs. There were two parties: Kṛṣṇa’s party and Śrīmatī Rādhikā’s party, and the main players were Kṛṣṇa and Śrīmatī. Subala and Madhumāṅgala and others were on Kṛṣṇa’s side, and Lalitā, Viśākhā, and the other sakhīs were on Rādhikā’s

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side. Kṛṣṇa put up something as a bet and was defeated. Then Rādhikā said, “What will You bet now? You should stake Your flute.”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “I will stake My flute, but what will You put up? You should stake an equally valuable thing. I value My flute like My very life, but I will stake it if You stake something of equal value.”

Rādhikā said, “Then You please say what I should stake.”

Kṛṣṇa said, “Alright - You should stake one of the friends of Your sakhīs.”

Being very pleased, Rādhikā agreed to this and whispered to one of Her sakhīs, “In the village nearby is a girl of the Pulinda tribe. Go and call her.” They brought the girl there, and entering that assembly the poor girl felt very shy. She felt ashamed because she was of a lower class, so reluctantly she sat in the back. Seeing her, Kṛṣṇa said, “I will not stake My flute for her! What is the meaning of this?” Then all of the gopīs began laughing and clapping. At that time, this Pulinda girl saw the beauty of Kṛṣṇa. Before it was described how all of the birds and animals became spellbound by seeing Kṛṣṇa, but this girl considered herself a dāsī of Rādhikā, so upon seeing Kṛṣṇa she became even more spellbound.

So the next morning while this aborigine girl was collecting wood and plants, she saw kuṅkuma lying on the grass, and automatically she knew where it had come from - the breasts of Rādhā. Are the birds, deer, or aborigines of Vṛndāvana ordinary? For instance, how do they know Kṛṣṇa is coming in their direction when He is taking the cows out for grazing? They all recognise His intoxicating fragrance. It is expected that the gopīs would naturally recognise this fragrance, but even the birds and animals are familiar with it. When the Pulinda girl saw this kuṅkuma, such intense desire to meet Kṛṣṇa arose in her heart that she was unable to restrain it.

When Kṛṣṇa is departing Nanda-bhavana to take the cows out to graze in the forest for the day, all of the men, women, and children of Vraja assemble along the road to catch a glimpse of Him. They are all standing along the path, and Kṛṣṇa is coming on His way playing the flute. At that time there are also some young girls who come to see Him who are in śānta-rati. There are

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many types of śānta-rati such as samanya (general) and svaccha. The aborigine girl was svaccha, which means that rati had arisen inside her, but not sthāyī-rati, her permanent internal sentiment. After a seed is planted, a creeper begins to grow from it. At that time its leaves have begun to appear but have not completely developed, and from looking at the leaves you cannot ascertain what kind of plant it is. But when the leaves become full, then you can tell what kind of plant it is. It is the same with rati, and the Pulinda girl's rati is described as being svaccha. Whenever she sees Kṛṣṇa reciprocating with His devotees in a particular mellow, she desires to share that same mellow with Him.

For instance, when she sees Mother Yaśodā nurturing Kṛṣṇa, reciting mantras so that no harm will come to Him, and wiping His face with the end of her sārī, she becomes spellbound. Without blinking she just gazes at Him, thinking, "I would like to be His mother just like her." This is svaccha-rati. Then a little later she sees Kṛṣṇa playing His flute, and running, playing, and eating with His friends with great pleasure, and then she again becomes spellbound, thinking, "I would like to become a sakhā so I can run and play with Him like this." Then later she sees Kṛṣṇa standing in His threefold-bending posture, playing the flute and gazing at the gopīs. He is shivering, His crown is tilting to one side, and His yellow shawl is slipping down. Seeing this, she thinks, "I would like to become a friend of Rādhā and serve Him with a similar sentiment." This is called svaccha-rati.

So this Pulinda girl, in comparison to the creepers, bees, clouds, and deer, is the best of all. As a result of witnessing Kṛṣṇa performing His pastimes, and especially from seeing Kṛṣṇa just the day before, she has gradually come to desire to enter the camp of Rādhā's servitors to be able to serve Him as they do. Therefore when she saw the kuṅkuma on top of the grass, smararujas - intense desire to meet Kṛṣṇa arose in her. If eagerness to meet Kṛṣṇa arises even in the birds and animals, then it is even more natural that it would arise in her. If such eagerness develops within a sādhaka, then it can be said that he is really engaged in sādhana-bhajana. But presently we have

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no such eagerness to meet Him; instead we are greatly determined to obtain material enjoyment. As yet we have no real eagerness for bhakti, but we should endeavour to obtain this eagerness because it is the root, the very life of bhajana.

The Pulinda girl looked at the kuṅkuma and began analysing it: “Where has this kuṅkuma come from? Has it come from the feet of Kṛṣṇa, or the feet of the gopīs? Kuṅkuma is not applied to Kṛṣṇa; only the gopīs apply kuṅkuma to their bodies, so how could it have turned up here? This is difficult to understand. Somehow I know that it could have only come from Kṛṣṇa’s feet, but how did it get on Kṛṣṇa’s feet? Oh, I understand! Fearing that Kṛṣṇa’s feet would be harmed by pebbles and thorns as He roams about, the gopīs sometimes place His feet on their breasts. Therefore this kuṅkuma must have come from Kṛṣṇa’s feet as He returned home from His rendezvous with the gopīs.” Understanding the situation, she at once became intoxicated, placed some of this kuṅkuma on her head, and by spreading it all over her whole body, her ...kāma was pacified.

The Bhāgavatam says that kāma, or lust, exists in the heart of the conditioned soul like a disease. This fire of lust burns inside the conditioned soul as he turns away from Bhagavān and casts his vision in the direction of māyā. The conditioned soul becomes attracted to the opposite sex, to wealth, and to being praised by others. Some leave material life and take up residence in a maṭha to engage in bhajana, and even attain a little ruci for taking harināma and hearing hari-kathā, then fall down and leave. Why? They were attracted to māyā, were they not? Certainly they were very attracted; if they had such strong attraction for Bhagavān, they wouldn’t have entered the material world in the first place. The attraction of māyā is very, very strong, and in this connection there is the example of Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa, a boy of sixteen or seventeen years. Nityānanda Prabhu, Rāyā Rāmānanda, and Svarūpa Dāmodara each said to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, “Prabhu, please don’t go to South India alone. I will accompany You.”

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Mahāprabhu replied, “If I take any of you, then the others will say, You are taking him, but not me? Then I will be at fault, so I will go alone.”

“Alright, then we will send someone whom You are not acquainted with: this simple and honest son of a brāhmaṇa. Keep him with You, because how Your mind changes we cannot understand. Sometimes You forget everything, even Your bodily needs. You require kaupīns and a waterpot, so who will carry them? Sometimes You throw them somewhere and proceed onward, and sometimes when You are crying out, ...Where is the Lord of My life? You roll on the ground, and even if Your clothes were to come off You wouldn’t notice! Crying and crying You just proceed onward. You will need someone to fetch water and beg alms for You, so please take this Kālā Kṛṣṇa-dāsa.”

Mahāprabhu agreed, and Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa accompanied Him until they reached Kanyākumārī, where there was a group of gypsies called Bhaṭṭathāris who would travel here and there with their bulls, donkeys, and belongings. Their business was to lure young boys and girls to join them - how? They would show boys a girl, and girls a boy. Once they had lured someone they would immediately move on, and the people of the village would not know where their son or daughter had gone. In this way they would set traps for innocent boys and girls, and there was a very large group of these gypsies nearby where Mahāprabhu was staying. One day Mahāprabhu went out begging, leaving Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa sitting underneath a tree. One of these gypsies approached him, and after speaking with him for some time, said, “It is as if you have been my son for a very long time! Look - we will marry you to this girl, and you will live with her very happily. Within our tribes you will become a king.” The poor boy was lured, and decided to go with them.

When Mahāprabhu returned and didn’t see him, He thought, “Where has that boy gone? Oh, those gypsies must have taken him!” Mahāprabhu entered their party, and locating Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa, grabbed him by the śikhā, saying, “You rascal! You left Me and came here?” He had to forcibly drag back Kālā Kṛṣṇadāsa, who didn’t even desire to leave there! So just see how,

even if one is associating with Bhagavān Himself, māyā can attract him. So what to speak of us? This māyā is very dangerous, and escaping its many trappings is very difficult. And even if someone can abandon everything - even their wife and family - still they may not be able to leave the desire for pratiṣṭhā. It is as if the desire for it runs in our veins. But if we receive some special mercy from guru, the Vaiṣṇavas, and Bhagavān, then we will be able to abandon that desire; otherwise we won't easily be able to leave it. We should make our own effort to leave it, but we must also receive their mercy, both.

*vikrīḍitaṁ vraja-vadhūbhir idaṁ ca viṣṇoḥ śraddhānvito nuśṛṇuyād atha  
varṇayed yaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg.  
10.33.39

If one faithfully hears the five chapters of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam which describe rāsa - Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes with the gopīs - then the heart disease of lust will be destroyed. But it must be heard with real faith, which is received from guru and the Vaiṣṇavas. If one enjoys reading novels, and considers these pastimes between Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs to be mere fiction, then it will not have the desired effect. Previously there was this lust in the Pulinda girl's heart, but by the mercy of the great bhāva of the gopīs, who are Kṛṣṇa's hlādinī-śakti, all anarthas can be destroyed. Therefore that kuṅkuma was the gopīs, and having been smeared on Kṛṣṇa's feet, it now lay on the grass invested with some powerful śakti. Having come in contact with both the gopīs and Kṛṣṇa, it had become so powerful.

How much śakti can be in footdust? Once Śrī Rāmacandra was walking along in a forest and He came across Gautama Ṛṣi, who had cursed his wife, Ahalyā, to become stone. When Rāma touched that stone with His feet, she immediately assumed her original form as a very beautiful goddess. She circumambulated Him, offered Him prayers, and then bid Him farewell and left with her husband. So this kuṅkuma of the gopīs mixed with the dust of

Kṛṣṇa's feet will have enormous śakti. In this Pulinda girl's heart was the disease of lust, but upon touching this kuṅkuma her heart was made supremely pure and was invested with kṛṣṇa-prema. Her feelings became like those of the gopīs, and following them, she began serving Kṛṣṇa. So in this verse the gopīs are saying, "For an aborigine girl, she is so fortunate! Even more so than the female deer. What would they understand of this kuṅkuma? But she has understood that this kuṅkuma is not ordinary; by touching it the amorous pastimes of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa arise in one's heart."

If a sādhaka applies the kuṅkuma of these descriptions to himself through hearing them - even in abhāsa, the semblance of real hearing - then his heart will also be supremely purified, and all his material desires will be destroyed. Here the gopīs are actually singing their own glories, but they are not thinking that way. Whose kuṅkuma was this? Their own; yet here, by the influence of Yogamāyā, they are forgetting that and singing the glories of the aborigine girl.

A devotee is one who considers himself extremely fallen. If we are thinking, "I am an advanced devotee and better than others; I can attract people by giving various meanings of Sanskrit verses, I possess so much bhakti, and so many people are showing me respect," then we have not yet become devotees. When even a little bhakti has entered someone's heart, then humility will certainly be there. Where there is no humility, we can understand that there is no bhakti. He who has become a better devotee is he whose humility has increased. Where humility exists in its full form, there bhakti will also be in its full form. And where there is no humility, there will not be even a trace of bhakti. More humility is found in a madhyama-adhikārī devotee than in a kaniṣṭha-adhikārī, and more humility exists in the uttama-adhikārī devotee than in the madhyama-adhikārī. Then it is found more in the residents of Goloka-Vraja than in the general class of uttama-adhikārīs, and amongst the vraja-vāsīs more humility can be seen in the gopīs, and amongst them the most humility is found in Śrīmatī Rādhikā. She is the

pinnacle of humility. In whomever She detects even a trace of bhakti, She considers that person worthy of Her reverence. She offers prayers to that person, thinking, “I should try to become like them.”

This is the vision of an *uttama* devotee: “Oh, Kaṁsa is fortunate! In order to kill Kaṁsa, Bhagavān has come in such an attractive form! He won’t kill Kaṁsa’s soul, but will show him mercy by releasing him from his body. At the same time, He has bestowed on this world pastimes which are full of unlimited purifying potency. If not for Kaṁsa, then Kṛṣṇa would not have appeared, and His glories would not have become known. Only because of fear of Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa was taken to Gokula. Then He returned to Mathurā only to kill Kaṁsa, and then He left for Dvārakā because of Kaṁsa. Why? Jarāsandha’s daughters were married to Kaṁsa, so when Kaṁsa was killed, they went crying to their father, ...For some reason Kṛṣṇa has killed your son-in-law! Taking an army, Jarāsandha attacked Kṛṣṇa seventeen times, so Kṛṣṇa thought, ...Every day there is fighting here, so we should go away from here, and He left for Dvārakā. It was all because of Kaṁsa. Kaṁsa was not an ordinary person, and that is why a *mahā-bhāgavata* Vaiṣṇava like Nārada would regularly go to see him.”

A *madhyama-adhikārī* may feel some hatred for Kaṁsa, but an *uttama-adhikārī* won’t. In a similar way the *gopīs* are considering the Pulinda girl to be superior to themselves and are glorifying her: “If we could take birth as a Pulinda girl, then our mother, father, and brothers would not restrict us from seeing Kṛṣṇa during the daytime. We could go to the forest every day and collect wood, but because we belong to higher class families, this is not possible for us now.” If a *sādhaka* is to enter into bhakti, he must have this humility; and when he does, he can really be called a *sādhaka*.

In the verse we are discussing, why does it say “śrī kuṅkuma”? It can mean that kuṅkuma which carries some special splendour, or it can mean reddish, like Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. Kṛṣṇa is of a *śyāma* complexion, but the palms of His hands and the soles of His feet are a deep reddish colour. This kuṅkuma is of the same hue, and when it came in contact with Kṛṣṇa’s feet, it assumed



some special splendour and also some special śakti. If food is prepared for and offered to Kṛṣṇa, His śakti enters into it - Kṛṣṇa's full śakti is in mahā-prasāda. Upon being touched by Kṛṣṇa's mouth it becomes saccidānanda, just like Him. So before the gopīs used this kuṅkuma it was not ...śrī, but coming in contact with Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet, all the śakti and splendour of those lotus feet entered into it, and it became extraordinarily beautiful. And where did that kuṅkuma come from originally? "Dayitā-stana-maṇḍitena": from Rādhikā, and therefore it can also be said that it became ...śrī from Her touch.

By seeing that kuṅkuma lying on the grass in the morning, ...smara-rujas - lust arose in the heart of the Pulinda girl. But when she smeared that kuṅkuma on her body, did her lust increase or diminish? All the jīvas in Vṛndāvana - the insects, birds, animals, and people - are always restless to see Kṛṣṇa; and when they see Him, does their eagerness for Him increase - or diminish? It certainly increases, but when they receive Kṛṣṇa's touch, then they may become a little peaceful. Therefore this śrī kuṅkuma is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa Himself; upon seeing it, the eagerness of the Pulinda girl increased, but upon spreading it all over her body, she became fully satisfied, and once again peaceful.

In speaking this verse, the gopīs considered the Pulinda girl to be ...pūrṇāḥ - to have become completely fulfilled, even more so than the birds and animals of Vraja. She was not as divinely beautiful as the gopīs and was unqualified to participate in amorous pastimes with Kṛṣṇa, but in considering her to be more fortunate than themselves, the gopīs are exhibiting a symptom of mādana, which is the upper stage of mahābhāva. This is when they consider an unqualified person, or even an inanimate object, to be superior to themselves, and even give an explanation of why they feel this way. The flute is an inanimate object, but because it always resides at Kṛṣṇa's lips and never becomes separated from Him, and even though it is of male gender, the gopīs feel that it is more fortunate than them. Their sentiment towards the flute is that it is like the second wife of Kṛṣṇa.

So here this feeling from the upper stage of mahābhāva has arisen in the gopīs towards the Pulinda girl. It is not possible for other devotees to have this high sentiment, and therefore in places like Dvārakā this sentiment isn't known. This beautiful bhāva is found only in Vraja. Even though this girl had no relationship with Kṛṣṇa, seeing how she began shivering and tears began flowing from her eyes when she noticed the kuṅkuma from Kṛṣṇa's feet which was lying on the grass, the gopīs desired to experience her sentiments. Śrīmatī Rādhikā said, "Such a bhāva never comes to us!" Here Rādhikā Herself is singing the glories of the Pulinda girl, and She is not considering the actual elevated state of the vraja-gopīs. She is not thinking about that. Whose kuṅkuma was it in the first place? Hers, but she is considering the aborigine girl to be more fortunate! This is a symptom of mahābhāva. "She is so fortunate! If in My next life I could take birth as a girl of the Pulinda tribe, then there would be no one to prohibit Me from seeing Kṛṣṇa, and I would also be able to experience such a beautiful bhāva."

## Chapter Nine

### Kṛṣṇa Enjoys Playing With His Friends

Superior to the Pulinda girl we have been discussing are the sakhās, and of them Śukadeva Gosvāmī says:

*yadi dūram gataḥ kṛṣṇo vana-śobha-kṣaṇāya tam ahaṁ pūrvam ahaṁ  
pūrvam iti saṁspṛśya remire*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.12.6 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.120

During the day while playing and jumping about with His sakhās, if Kṛṣṇa, desiring to see the splendour of the forest, would go to a somewhat distant place, then with great speed the sakhās would run to Him saying, "I will touch Him first! I will touch Him first!" and in this way they enjoyed life. They would embrace Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa would also embrace them. They would refer

to one another as “Sakhā, Sakhā!” and they would carry one another on their shoulders. Because they would play with Kṛṣṇa in such an unrestricted fashion, both indoors and outside, these young gopas are superior to the Pulinda girl.

In the early morning Kṛṣṇa would still be sleeping, and Subala, Madhumaṅgala, and others would come and jump on His bed to awaken Him. Mother Yaśodā would be hesitant to awaken Him, because generally a sleeping child should not be awakened. If He slept too late, then to awaken Him perhaps she would sing a sweet song and gently sprinkle some water on His face. But the sakhās would simply jump on Him, and then they would accompany Him to the forest for the day. While eating and drinking, while inside the house or outside, coming and going, they would always accompany Kṛṣṇa. Seeing this, the gopīs say, “These sakhās are so fortunate! Day and night, anywhere and everywhere, they are always playing with Kṛṣṇa! If we could become sakhās, then we would always feel great happiness! We could always be by His side. Sometimes Mother Yaśodā feeds them at the same time she feeds Kṛṣṇa, and then they play together all day long. In this way they are always fully satisfied.”

Singing the glories of the gopa-kumāras, the gopīs became absorbed in bhāva. This is the nature of prema, and especially the nature of mahābhāva. Recognising even a trace of prema in others, the gopīs consider them to be more fulfilled than they themselves. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was in Purī surrounded by His premī devotees, a dog approached Him. It was making a whining sound, and tears began to fall from its eyes. Mahāprabhu was eating coconut and gave that dog some of His prasāda, and when the next day the dog was nowhere to be found, everyone understood that it went to Vaikuṅṭha. So who wouldn’t desire to become that dog and be able to approach Mahāprabhu and receive some of His prasāda? Then rolling on the ground in ecstasy, relinquishing his material body and becoming an eternal associate of Bhagavān in Vaikuṅṭha - who wouldn’t desire such a benediction? Especially those who have prema would desire it. Similarly,

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upon seeing someone receiving the kindness and affection of Kṛṣṇa - whether they are qualified for it or not - Rādhikā becomes intoxicated and thinks, “They are more fortunate than Me; I wish that My fortune could become like theirs.”

Accompanied by countless sakhās, Kṛṣṇa takes the calves out to graze for the day. When calves become a little bigger they give up drinking the cows milk, and Kṛṣṇa takes something like nine lākhas of these calves out to graze. Meanwhile Śrīdāmā comes, and how many calves does he have? All of his calves join the procession. Then Madhumaṅgala, Subala, Stokakṛṣṇa, Arjuna and countless other sakhās with countless calves join them. Amongst this procession there are different parties, like when a kīrtana procession is going along. One party holds a banner with the words “Keśavajī Gauḍīya Maṭha,” another holds a banner with the name “Rūpa-Sanātana Gauḍīya Maṭha,” and another party hold a banner displaying the name of another maṭha. Similarly, the sakhās are going along together, but in separate parties. Sometimes those who desire to separate during the course of the day do so, but at the end of the afternoon when Kṛṣṇa plays the particular melody on His flute which signifies that it is time to return, they again come together. Then upon returning, they again go their separate ways when each sakhā takes his calves and goes to his own father’s house.

While going along together with their millions of calves, the sakhās play their flutes and horns, sing, and play various games. In this verse it says ... remire , which comes from the word ...ramanā , which means to enjoy. Enjoying with His sakhās, Kṛṣṇa enters the forest, where they decorate each other with the many varieties of flowers and leaves as well as peacock feathers. At once Kṛṣṇa is decorated like the king of dancers, and He also decorates the other boys. Then they begin playing; how does it start? Śrīdāmā steals one of Madhumaṅgala’s beloved laḍḍus and gives it to another boy, and it is passed around so many times that no one knows where it has gone. Madhumaṅgala approaches everyone asking them, “Have

you seen my laḍḍu?” and if they have it, they keep it hidden. One gopa steals another’s flute, horn, or stick, and when the owner of it pursues him, he throws it away and then another gopa picks it up and runs with it. In this way they play in their attractive bāla-līlā.

The boys are all laughing and Kṛṣṇa smiles, but if Kṛṣṇa doesn’t smile, then everything is spoiled. Everything is going on exclusively for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. At that time, these children have forgotten their homes, families, and even their own bodily needs - everything. One boy is playing the flute, another is singing like a bird, another is mimicking a monkey, and another is imitating the sound of a frog. For the purpose of increasing their eagerness, sometimes Kṛṣṇa hides, and then the sakhās are unable to stay where they are and they begin searching for Him. If one of them catches a glimpse of Him, then at once they all race there. One after the other they embrace Kṛṣṇa, and laughing, Kṛṣṇa embraces them in return.

When Kṛṣṇa would sometimes go to a slightly distant place to see the splendour of the forest, the sakhās, upon losing the paramānanda they experience by playing with Him, become very unhappy. Sanātana Gosvāmī says in his commentary that Kṛṣṇa plays with the sakhās for nine hours each day while taking the cows and calves out to graze. So when do the gopīs receive the opportunity to be with Him for that long? At that time, by the arrangement of Yogamāyā, Kṛṣṇa assumes two forms. In one form He remains playing with the gopas, and in the other form He enjoys with the gopīs at Kusuma-sarovara or Rādhā-kunḍa. Or on some pretext He tells the sakhās, “I am going to Kusuma-sarovara to get a drink of water,” and by the influence of Yogamāyā He seems to return in one second only. The gopas don’t know how much time has elapsed, just as an entire night of Brahmā elapsed while the rāsa-līlā was being performed. During the rāsa-līlā, did any of the members of Kṛṣṇa’s or the gopīs households know of it? They considered that it was only an ordinary night lasting eight hours. So either by assuming two forms or remaining in only one form, Kṛṣṇa would sometimes also enjoy with the gopīs during the day.

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Next comes this verse:

*itthaṁ satāṁ brahma-sukhānubhūtyā dāsyam gatānāṁ para-daivatena  
māyāśritānāṁ nara-dārakeṇa sārdhaṁ vijahruḥ kṛta-puṇya-puṣjaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.12.11 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.121

“In this way the greatly fortunate cowherd boys enjoy in various ways with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is seen as the Brahman effulgence by the jñānīs, as the supremely worshipable Deity by His servants, and as an ordinary boy by people in general. (Or ...māyāśritā can also mean that those who had received His utmost mercy, due to being devoid of the mood of opulence, saw Him merely as the son of Nanda.)”

Kṛṣṇa had killed Aghāsura, and while taking the cows out to graze during the daytime, the sakhās were playing with the demon’s bones and skin. There was no bad odour coming from the demon’s body, and all the sakhās thought, “How has it become dried out like this?” Because Kṛṣṇa had assumed the forms of those cowherd boys for one year immediately after the killing of Aghāsura, they thought that only one day had elapsed since the demon was slain. Brahmā had hidden them in a cave for one year under yogic trance, but when Kṛṣṇa glanced at them they revived, and the expanded forms of cowherd boys entered back into His original form. When Kṛṣṇa killed Aghāsura, the effulgence of the demon’s soul merged into Kṛṣṇa’s feet. Brahmā and many yogīs were watching this and thought, “Who is this? He appears to be an ordinary young boy, so how is this possible?”

This verse says ...satāṁ , which means saints who are always fixed in meditation. For them Kṛṣṇa is the personification of the ānanda of the impersonal Brahman, and for devotees who consider themselves His servants, He is para-daivatena - the supreme god. When Kṛṣṇa entered the wrestling arena of Kāmsa, who saw Him as the para-devatā? The Vṛṣṇis, who considered Him to be their worshipable Deity, but the gopīs and other residents of Vraja didn’t see Him like that. Some saw Him as a friend, some

as a son, and some as a paramour. “Māyāśritānām nara-dārakeṇa”: and those under the influence of māyā saw Him as an ordinary young boy. The cowherd boys were playing with Him because kṛta-puṇya-puṣjaḥ - by their “accumulation of pious activities”, they were able to enjoy with Him in this way.

There are three meanings of the word ...puṇya . First it can mean conventional pious activities, but performance of this type of puṇya does not qualify one to meet Kṛṣṇa. Secondly it can mean sukṛti, and by accumulation of this one receives sādhu-saṅga, then they may accept the shelter of a guru, and then develop bhakti. And when bhakti becomes perfected, prema comes, and when one has this prema, then he can meet Kṛṣṇa. By the puṇya of personalities like Mahārāja Hariscandra, Dadhīci Ṛṣi, or Mahārāja Śibi, can one meet Bhagavān? No. By the practice of sādhana-bhakti one won’t meet Bhagavān, and even by possessing bhāva-bhakti one won’t meet Him. When one has prema-bhakti, then he can meet Kṛṣṇa. Don’t consider all types of bhakti to be one and the same. The cultivation of sādhana-bhakti will gradually elevate one, by bhāva-bhakti one may receive some darśana of Kṛṣṇa, but only prema-bhakti can overpower Him. To become a sakhā and live with Kṛṣṇa may not even be accomplished by having prema-bhakti if one does not have the bhāva of Vraja. These sakhās possessed this prema-bhakti with vraja-bhāva, and that is the meaning of kṛta-puṇya-puṣjaḥ.

Sanātana Gosvāmī describes how the sakhās would play together with great intimacy. Sometimes they would run and play with Kṛṣṇa without any clothing. They would eat from each other’s plates and place food in each other’s mouths, and they had no fear of reprimand from their elders or anyone. Speaking this verse, Śukadeva Gosvāmī felt great ānanda, though he could not remain solely on this topic for long. He is the parrot of Rādhikā, and there is nothing which can fully immerse him in ānanda which doesn’t include Her name. But here he became spellbound in sakhya-rasa, and that bhāva poured forth from his heart in the form of his words. In this verse he

has used the word *satām* which means ...saint, and here it refers to those who view Kṛṣṇa as the personification of *brahmānanda*. It refers to those who are adorned with the twenty-six qualities of a devotee and who are *jṣānī-bhaktas* like the four *Kumāras*. But if *Rūpa* and *Sanātana Gosvāmīs* had personally described a saint by their own definition, they would have referred to those who have the *bhāva* of *Vraja*, and amongst them those who possess the *bhāva* of the *gopīs*, and out of them the one who possesses the *bhāva* of being a *dāsī* of *Rādhikā*.

Once, *Durvāsā Muni* came and saw Kṛṣṇa playing with His friends. The boys were putting dust on top of Kṛṣṇa's head, and Kṛṣṇa was chasing them and throwing dust on them also. They were sometimes embracing one another, sometimes singing, and sometimes verbally abusing one another as children do. *Durvāsā* thought, "What is this? He who is the very embodiment of Brahman has taken birth in the house of Nanda?" Gazing in Kṛṣṇa's direction, he became spellbound and just stood motionlessly. Kṛṣṇa saw him from a distance, and at once left His playing and approached him, saying, "Bābā, I have defeated Subala!" Then Subala came and said, "I have defeated Kanhaiyā!" Another boy came and said, "I defeated Kṛṣṇa!" and then Kṛṣṇa said, "No Bābā, I defeated him!" *Durvāsā* could only silently gaze at Kṛṣṇa, and then he sat down. He couldn't determine who defeated who and was unable to give them a verdict. Then Kṛṣṇa sat in his lap, and grabbing his beard, said, "Bābā, you don't speak? Are you deaf and dumb?" Then feeling restless, Kṛṣṇa raced away from there smiling, and began playing again.

*Durvāsā* had not entered *Vraja* after only one or two days journey; he had been wandering for millions of years and had seen countless universes, countless *Brahmās* and *Śaṅkaras* - and after that he entered *Vraja*. Wonderstruck, he thought, "Here, playing with these boys, is the personification of *brahmānanda*?" From a distance he offered *praṇāma* so as not to disturb Kṛṣṇa's *līlā*, and then he went away from there. This is the vision of Kṛṣṇa being referred to in this verse by the line "*itthaṁ satām brahma-sukhānubhūtyā*."



Then the next line refers to devotees who see Kṛṣṇa as para-devatā, their supremely worshipable Deity. And then the third line says, “māyāśritānām nara-dārakeṇa,” which means that those under the influence of māyā see Kṛṣṇa as an ordinary child. But one more meaning has been given here: if this were to refer to those souls trapped in material illusion, then the sequence would be inconsistent. First was described how the ṛṣis see Kṛṣṇa, and then how the devotees see Him, so here māyāśritānām must refer to those who are under the influence of Yogamāyā. Sanātana Gosvāmī quotes this verse:

*kātyāyanī mahā-māye mahā-yoginy adhīśvari nanda-gopa-sutaṁ devi patim  
me kuru te namaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg.  
10.22.4

“O Kātyāyanī, O possessor of the yogamāyā-śakti! Please give us the boon of having Kṛṣṇa as our husband.”

So in the verse we are discussing, nara means that those who have taken shelter of Yogamāyā saw the son of Nanda Mahārāja as an ordinary boy. They didn’t see Him with aiśvarya-bhāva, but with mādhyura-bhāva. They always played with Him in nara-līlā, never considering Him to be Bhagavān. If Kṛṣṇa ever tried to tell them that He was Bhagavān, the gopīs would start clapping and say, “What, You are Bhagavān? You are only a liar and a cheat, and when You are hungry You break Your mother’s pots of yoghurt!” So here, māyāśritānām must refer to the gopīs who by reciting this siddha-mantra and offering pūjā to Kātyāyanī received Kṛṣṇa as their paramour. Otherwise the sequence of the verse would be incorrect. And in the words nara-dārakeṇa, the word dāra can also mean ...wife , so in this way it also refers to the gopīs, who always saw Kṛṣṇa as a kiśora, handsomely decorated like a new bridegroom, and appearing supremely attractive as the king of dancers. This verse is saying that with this dearest paramour of the gopīs,

the sakhās are playing all day long, so how fortunate must they be considered to be?

Chapter Ten  
The Glories of Sakhya-rasa

*yat-pāda-paṁśur bahu-janma-kṛcchrato  
dhṛtātmabhir yogibhir apy alābhyaḥ  
sa eva yādṛg viṣayaḥ svayaṁ sthitaḥ  
kiṁ varṇyate diṣṭam aho vrajaukasām*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.12.12 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.122

“Great yogīs perform severe austerities for many lifetimes, but even when with great difficulty they have completely controlled their minds, they still cannot attain even one particle of the dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How then can I possibly describe the good fortune of the vraja-vāsīs, who daily received His direct darśana?”

Yogīs, through many births of practicing yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, dhyāna, dhāraṇā, pratyāhāra, and samādhi, are unable to touch even one particle of the dust of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet. They perform such severe austerities but are unable to reach Him, and this refers to Brahmā also. Brahmā has a very long lifespan, and he even sees Kṛṣṇa sometimes, but when he approached Kṛṣṇa, did he receive the dust of His feet? When Brahmā came to Vṛndāvana, Kṛṣṇa was absorbed in playing with His friends. When Brahmā arrived, Kṛṣṇa glanced at him, but then quickly returned to playing. Brahmā could only offer prayers, and didn’t directly receive the dust of His feet. So what to speak of ordinary yogīs? But that very Vrajendra-nandana, although He is Bhagavān Himself, stands before the vraja-vāsīs and even plays with them. Even the children younger than Kṛṣṇa would desire to accompany Him when He took the cows out for grazing; they

certainly wouldn't just remain in their homes! The mothers of these children would tell Kṛṣṇa, "Look after my son today," and Kṛṣṇa would take those small boys with Him. What to speak of just playing with them, after walking some distance, Kṛṣṇa would ask one of them, "Are you feeling tired?" and He would lovingly take him on His lap and begin massaging his feet.

In this verse Śukadeva Gosvāmī says, "Aho! While taking the cows out to graze, Kṛṣṇa will sometimes even massage their feet! With His own hands He decorates the bāla-gopas, and they also decorate Him! They play games together, and when Kṛṣṇa is victorious He smiles with great ānanda. They eat together, and play jokes on one another - who can describe the good fortune of the vraja-vāsīs? The ...pāda-paṁśur , the dust of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet which even the yogīs are searching for in their meditation, falls from His feet and is spread all around as He jumps about, as His friends massage His feet, and as He climbs in the kadamba trees. And Yaśodā wipes away the dust from Kṛṣṇa's face and applies fresh aṣjana to His eyes. And as He dances with the gopīs, with His own hands He wipes the dust from their lotus faces and places it on His head. Tell me, how glorious is that dust? Who can describe it?"

Quoting these verses in his Bṛhād-bhāgavatāmṛta, ānanda swells in the heart of Sanātana Gosvāmī, as if he is churning cream and tasting its very essence. Then another feeling comes and he quotes this verse:

*kvacit pallava-talpeṣu*  
 niyuddha-śrama-karśitaḥ  
 vṛkṣa-mūlāśrayaḥ śete  
 gopotsaṅgopabarhaṇaḥ

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.16 and Bṛhad-  
 bhāg. 2.7.123

Becoming fatigued from wrestling and playing, Kṛṣṇa spreads His feet out, and one sakhā, his heart melted with love and affection for Him, takes Kṛṣṇa's feet on his lap. Millions of sakhās arrange millions of beds made of

flowers for His comfort. Then, unknown even to Himself, by Yogamāyā, Kṛṣṇa expands into millions of forms and accepts the service of each and every one of them. Otherwise, if millions of sakhās all came at once to massage His feet, there would be competition and a great commotion. Therefore Yogamāyā arranges everything very beautifully so that there will not be any conflict. Underneath the cooling shade of a tree, the sakhās use their own laps as pillows for Kṛṣṇa and gently lull Him to sleep.

*pāda-saṁvāhanam cakruḥ kecit tasya mahātmanaḥ apare hata-pāpmāno  
vyajanaiḥ samavījayan*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.17 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.124

“At that time, one greatly fortunate sakhā would massage His feet, and another would fan His body with a fan made of leaves.”

Because they would massage Kṛṣṇa’s legs with great love, here the sakhās are referred to as ...mahātmās. There are millions of sakhās and all are exalted. Some would fan Him, but not with a cāmara; with a fan made of flowers and peacock feathers they would fan Him with great love. They serve Kṛṣṇa by providing their own laps as pillows for His head - can such good fortune be seen anywhere else? Their affection for Kṛṣṇa is supremely natural in the mood of nara-līlā, considering Him to be an ordinary child. Seeing how Kṛṣṇa has exerted Himself in wrestling with them and in taking the cows out to graze, the sakhās serve Him with great affection to remove His exhaustion. When Kṛṣṇa was driving Arjuna’s chariot and the sharp arrows of Bhīṣma were piercing Him, did anyone on the battlefield feel any real pain because of that? But are the sakhās like this? To remove even one drop of perspiration from Kṛṣṇa’s brow they are prepared to give up their very lives.

Because the sakhās are engaged in massaging Kṛṣṇa’s legs, they are described as mahātmās. Mahātmā means a great soul, and when does one become a great soul? When he attains the service of Kṛṣṇa - otherwise not.

Here the word ...mahātmanaḥ can also be an adjective for Kṛṣṇa who is full in six opulences and who though being ātmārāma and āptakāma still desires to accept service from others. Because He never really becomes exhausted, He has no need for the beds of flowers arranged by the sakhās. If after fighting with so many asuras and holding up Govardhana Hill for seven days He did not become exhausted, then how could playing with some small children exhaust Him? Thinking, “They have such sincere desires to serve Me that they have come running to Me?”, then - although He is Parabrahma and āptakāma - still He melts in emotion and lies down on the beds which they arranged and falls asleep. For this reason He is referred to as a mahātmā. Mahātmā can also mean glories, and Kṛṣṇa’s glories are the six opulences which He possesses.

Though it seems that these glories would not be exhibited as He is playing the part of an ordinary young boy in this nara-līlā, He manifests these opulences by expanding into millions of forms to accept service from each and every sakhā, and not even one sakhā knows of it. If Kṛṣṇa were to display to them that “I am the possessor of all opulences and can assume unlimited forms,” then becoming astonished they would all begin offering prayers, and there would be no service for Kṛṣṇa to accept. Therefore He is mahātmanaḥ.

It is like when someone gives millions of rupees in charity but doesn’t think anything of it. This is the glory of giving charity, but if someone gives something and then says to others, “Do you understand how much I have given?” then it is not glorious. Sudāmā didn’t consider what he gave Kṛṣṇa to be important, his wife didn’t consider it to be, and no one in the entire world would consider it to be anything substantial; but that offering was the most glorious. In the same way, the sakhās are giving their everything, their prema, and because by manifesting His opulences Kṛṣṇa gives everyone an opportunity to serve Him, He is mahātmanaḥ. In the rāsa-līlā He gave all of the gopīs an opportunity, and in the Brahma-vimohana-līlā He gave all of the cows and older gopīs the chance to become His mother by expanding into so

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many forms, and in both līlās no one knew of it. Therefore in this verse the adjective mahātmanaḥ is more appropriate in referring to Kṛṣṇa.

There are countless parties of sakhās which all have their respective leaders, and just as there are various kinds of gopīs, there are also five kinds of sakhās: sakhā, priya sakhā, preṣṭha-sakhā, para-preṣṭha sakhā, and priya-narma sakhā. Amongst them are thousands of parties, but there is never any conflict in their service. When the prime minister comes here, many congressmen say, “I will garland the prime minister!”, and there is commotion. But there are millions of sakhās and there is never any conflict because Kṛṣṇa’s aiśvarya is wonderful. Each and every sakhā thinks, “Today I am the most fortunate; Kṛṣṇa has given this good opportunity to me only because He loves me so much!” Yogamāyā arranges everything so that neither Kṛṣṇa or the sakhās know what is happening, otherwise Kṛṣṇa won’t be able to taste the sakhya-rasa. But this way He can simply go on playing with the boys and tasting the rasa.

In this verse the words “hata-pāpmāno” don’t mean “without sin”, because there is no possibility of sin in the sakhās anyway. It means that they served Kṛṣṇa with melted hearts and great affection. Sometimes we serve with love, but mostly we serve because we feel that it is our duty. But if service is done out of pure affection, then Bhagavān will really desire our service. So hata-pāpmāno means that the sakhās service was free from any feelings of duty, and with fans made of fragrant flowers and peacock feathers they softly fanned Kṛṣṇa to relieve His exhaustion. But it can also have one more meaning: by hearing descriptions of the lives of great devotees such as these sakhās, all of one’s sins will be eliminated, and for those whose internal forms are as sakhās, intense hankering for this type of service will arise within them.

Seeing all of this in his form as Lavaṅga-maṣjarī, Sanātana Gosvāmī is submerged in sakhya-rasa, thinking, “I would also like to become a sakhā and serve Kṛṣṇa in that intimate way.” Then he quotes the next verse:

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*anye tad-anurūpāṇi manoḥṣāṇi mahātmanaḥ gāyanti sma mahā-rāja sneha-  
klinna-dhiyaḥ śanaiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.18 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.125

“My dear Mahārāja, other sakhās would sing attractive songs appropriate for resting-time, and all the cowherd boys hearts would melt in affection for Kṛṣṇa.”

Some other boys then began singing charming songs which were tasteful to Kṛṣṇa. They sang songs of Kṛṣṇa’s childhood līlā which were manoḥṣāṇi - so full of rasa that it caused Kṛṣṇa’s heart to overflow with ānanda. Here the word ...mahārāja refers to Parīkṣit Mahārāja, who being very rasika is the cause of Śukadeva Gosvāmī speaking such beautiful things.

If Sanātana Gosvāmī had not come to this world, then such simple, beautiful, and sweet explanations of these verses would have never been given. Even Śrīdhara Svāmī, the famous commentator on the Bhāgavatam, didn’t give explanations like Sanātana Gosvāmī’s; his explanations were mostly in relation to vaidhī-bhakti and for showing the difference between our philosophy and Advaitavāda. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu respected Śrīdhara Svāmī’s commentary, and using that as a foundation, Sanātana Gosvāmī established Mahāprabhu’s beautiful bhāva of bhakti in his own commentary on the Tenth Canto. Then Jīva Gosvāmī gave further light to that explanation with his Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī commentary, and accepting both of those commentaries as remnants, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura extracted the rasa from them and composed his own commentary. Hundreds of commentaries on the Bhāgavatam have been written, but none of them are as beautiful as his.

The gopas, their hearts melted in great affection, sang beautiful songs for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. Seeing that Kṛṣṇa was fatigued, the sakhās made pillows of their own laps and placed Kṛṣṇa’s head there. Kṛṣṇa never really becomes tired, but seeing their desire to render service He became fatigued. As Kṛṣṇa

was lying like this, some were massaging His legs, others were rubbing His back, others were rubbing His head, and by looking at His face it appeared that He was resting comfortably and His fatigue was fading.

“Sneha-kinna-dhiyaḥ” means that with tears in their eyes and melted hearts, the gopas sang softly in such a way as to lull Kṛṣṇa to sleep. They sang songs related exclusively to Kṛṣṇa’s boyhood pastimes which would give Kṛṣṇa the most pleasure. Sanātana Gosvāmī says in his commentary that these boys voices were as beautiful as the birdsong of the koel. After all, they are eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa, so will they be any less expert than Him in singing? Madhumaṅgala and Subala could sing just as sweetly as Kṛṣṇa, just as Mahāprabhu’s associates could also sing very sweetly. They sang softly and sweetly to increase Kṛṣṇa’s ānanda, and they sang in the melody which was appropriate for the afternoon time.

Once, before Nārada had learned the art of singing, he went to the heavenly planets and began singing. The words of the song were good, but it was out of tune and the melody was not correct. Present there in heaven is the demigod of melody named Sura, and upon hearing Nārada singing out of tune he actually became physically deformed. Everyone there who heard Nārada’s singing felt pain in their hearts. Then someone approached him and said, “My friend, your singing has caused Sura and all of the beautiful singers present here to become ugly and deformed, so you should immediately go to Brahmā and learn the art of singing.”

So Nārada went to Brahmā, and Brahmā told him, “You should approach Sarasvatī and learn from her.” Sarasvatī taught him how to sing the appropriate melodies, and when he returned to the heavenly planets and sang again, all of the residents there were restored to their original forms. Then Nārada became the greatest preacher in the world of beautiful devotional songs. If in kīrtana the correct melody is not sung at the appropriate time, then it will be inauspicious. In the morning we sing a particular melody, and in the evening we sing a different one. If we don’t sing the appropriate melodies according to the time, then Sura, the demigod



of melody, will suffer greatly. Those of us here who have to hear it will feel pain, and he will also feel pain.

Knowing all the appropriate songs and melodies, the sakhās were all masters of singing. In the same way, Lalitā, Viśākhā, Tūṅavidyā, and all of the sakhīs are also expert in singing as well as in all other arts. The sakhās are not less skilful than Kṛṣṇa in singing ability, and they have the skill to slowly raise and again lower their pitch to create very wonderful melodies. This expertise cannot be attained in only one life; if someone has it, then we can understand that it is coming from previous lives.

Kṛṣṇa was resting with His eyes closed, and listening as the sakhās did wonderful things with gentle waves of sound. At that time Kṛṣṇa was more grave than millions of oceans, and for His pleasure the sakhās softly sang songs which, being saturated with bhakti, were very tasteful to Him. They sang songs describing the glories of His playful activities, the glories of Mother Yaśodā, and the glories of the gopīs love for Him. In this way, their hearts full of rasa, they softly sang to Kṛṣṇa in the afternoon, and listening more and more with supreme ānanda, Kṛṣṇa closed His eyes and became overwhelmed with prema.

When we offer food to Kṛṣṇa, what are our feelings? We chant the mantra, but is the necessary bhāva there, or not? Our feelings should be like those of Yaśodā-maiyā: with great affection she seats Kṛṣṇa and pampering Him, begins to feed Him, saying, “Take a little of this, it is very nice.... Here, take some of this, it is the nicest.” Tell me, then, with how much prema is she feeding Him? We should try to offer food to Kṛṣṇa with these feelings, and sing kīrtana at that time with the feelings of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. When we make an offering, we sing the songs he has written - “Bhaja bhakata-vatsala” and “Yaśomatī-nandana” - but generally we only memorise them and don’t consider the feelings within them. There are so many beautiful sentiments in those songs, and this is how the sakhās serve Kṛṣṇa - massaging Him with great affection, and singing to Him with great bhāva. At once their hearts melted, and as Kṛṣṇa was listening, His heart also melted. Therefore

Śukadeva Gosvāmī, being very rasika, said sneha-kinna-dhiyaḥ - Kṛṣṇa was overpowered by prema and rendered helpless. Once the singing started, even if someone wanted Kṛṣṇa to get up and move to another place, He couldn't; being spellbound, He could only remain in the same position, with His heart melted and tears rolling down His cheeks. Seeing Kṛṣṇa like this, in this verse Śukadeva Gosvāmī has described Him using the word mahātmanaḥ.

Sanātana Gosvāmī has given still one more meaning here: mahātmanaḥ can also mean ...lampaṭa-śekhara, the king of debauchees. While Kṛṣṇa seems to be asleep, He is listening to the sakhās singing songs about His pastimes which are full of His mischievous pranks. Taking the gopīs clothes He climbed a tree, leaving the poor girls shivering in the water and begging for their clothing back. He said, "You have all committed offenses, so you must come before Me and beg forgiveness." In beautiful, soft voices the gopas sang songs of pastimes like this and Kṛṣṇa's ānanda at once increased.

Kṛṣṇa is supremely rasika, and He is sarvajña, the knower of all. But still, even though He knows what they will sing next before they actually sing it, when He hears it He becomes over-whelmed with prema and tears begin to flow from His eyes. And He receives much more ānanda from their singing than He does from their massaging Him. Their singing is what really makes Him rest comfortably - and from this we can understand that kīrtana is the best service. Although all the gopas were massaging Him and this certainly increased His prema, when their service included kīrtana, which is bhagavat-priya, the service which is most dear to Kṛṣṇa, just see how wonderful His condition became! His prema increased until He was completely overwhelmed.

In this verse the word mahārāja appears. What is its meaning? "Mahān-rūpena-rājate": he who is radiant with some special splendour. He in whose mind the desire for worldly enjoyment doesn't shine, but instead whose thinking is always resplendent with thoughts of bhagavad-bhakti, is called ...

Mahārāja . Here it can refer to Parīkṣit Mahārāja, and it can also mean that these most charming pastimes of Kṛṣṇa with the sakhās are the mahārāja, or the best of all līlās. If one hears and chants the descriptions of these pastimes where Kṛṣṇa is playing in His full glory with the sakhās, then he also becomes fully glorious and can also be called Mahārāja.

Hearing Śukadeva Gosvāmī describe how the sakhās relaxed Kṛṣṇa, how Kṛṣṇa’s heart was at once melted in affection, and how He became so overpowered that He was unable to even move, Parīkṣit Mahārāja said, “Aho! Who can conceive of their good fortune?” This description influenced him so deeply that tears began to glide down his cheeks, and his heart also melted. This is why in this verse Śukadeva Gosvāmī refers to him as Mahārāja: in its full form bhakti had entered his heart, and prema began to flow there. Seeing that he was fully qualified to hear the transcendental glories of the fortunate cowherd boys, Śukadeva Gosvāmī referred to him as Mahārāja.

Mahārāja can also refer to those pastimes which are the best of all. Through their singing, the gopas are bringing remembrance of the gopīs to Kṛṣṇa. Being very pleased, Kṛṣṇa smiles from ear to ear, and then the sakhās also begin to smile, thinking, “He is appreciating what we are singing.” Mahārāja can also be an adjective to describe the cowherd boys, whose hearts are always saturated with simple, natural sakhya-bhāva. Being overwhelmed in their intimate service to Kṛṣṇa, they would experience anurāga, and sometimes even mahābhāva. In her vātsalya, Mother Yaśodā may sometimes experience anurāga, but she never experiences mahābhāva. But sometimes it comes to Subala, Śrīdāmā, Madhumaṅgala, Arjuna, and other priya-narma sakhās. Their pristine hearts radiant with the wealth of rasa, they softly sing songs which increase the ānanda of both Kṛṣṇa and themselves.

## Chapter Eleven

### Nanda and Yaśodā’s Love for Kṛṣṇa

Next, in Sanātana Gosvāmī's heart, feelings of vātsalya-bhāva begin to come, and he begins quoting verses describing that sentiment:

*nandaḥ kim akarod brahmana  
śreya eva mahodayam  
yaśoda vā mahā-bhāga  
pāpau yasyāḥ stanam hariḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.8.46 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.126

Śrī Parīkṣit Mahārāja asked, “My dear brāhmaṇa, which supremely auspicious sādhana did Nanda perform, and which austerities did the supremely fortunate Yaśodā undergo to have her breast-milk drunk by Śrī Hari?”

Once, after Kṛṣṇa had eaten some soil, Mother Yaśodā forced Him to open His mouth, and when He did, she saw the entire creation therein. Seeing so many universes with so many Śaṅkaras and Viṣṇus, she thought, “What is this?” When Kṛṣṇa revealed His viśva-rūpa (Universal Form) to Arjuna, Arjuna thought “This is Bhagavān!” and with folded hands began offering prayers, but Yaśodā didn't do this. Trembling, she thought, “Has a ghost possessed me? Has someone cast a spell on my child? Is this the māyā of the demigods, or what? What has happened to my child?” Rubbing her eyes in astonishment, she looked again and then it had all disappeared. She thought, “Whose māyā was this? How did it happen?” She didn't consider that “This is Bhagavān!” She continued to see Him only as a small child.

Being very frightened, she took Kṛṣṇa to the family priest and told him, “I saw something very astonishing within my child's mouth! Someone must have cast a spell upon Him! Please rid Him of this curse!” The family priest said, “Don't be afraid, we will immediately make Him alright. You bring some gold, some cloth, and some cow dung, and bring some cows to give in charity to the brāhmaṇas.” After she had brought all of these things, the

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priest chanted the appropriate mantras and Mother Yaśodā's mind was set at ease.

In this verse Parīkṣit Mahārāja says, “Considering Kṛṣṇa to be his son, Nanda Bābā loves Him so much; he takes Kṛṣṇa on his shoulders saying, ... My dear son, my dear son! and for this reason he is ...mahodaya . But greater than him is Mother Yaśodā, who is ...mahā-bhāga - the most fortunate! Although Hari steals away the hearts of everyone in the entire universe and is the nurturer of all, she takes Him on her lap and feeds Him breast-milk! What auspicious activities did they perform in their previous lives to receive such benedictions?”

Now Sanātana Gosvāmī will begin describing the good fortune of Yaśodā and Nanda Bābā so that their mood of service will begin to arise within us. By hearing the descriptions of these pastimes, all the contamination within one's heart will be eradicated, and feelings of spontaneous love for Kṛṣṇa will be permanently established there. If we hear these types of descriptions during the day and then meditate on them during the night, then that is called smaraṇa, and from that eventually samādhi will come, so is there any greater sādhana than this? When he was hearing the Bhāgavatam from Śukadeva Gosvāmī, Parīkṣit Mahārāja only continued listening and hardly spoke at all. Therefore this sādhana is also sādhya, the final result. By hearing hari-kathā one's heart will be completely purified, whereas by practicing any other limb of vaidhī-bhakti it won't happen as quickly.

The viśva-rūpa is an aspect of Bhagavān's aiśvarya, but upon seeing it, not even a trace of aiśvarya-bhāva arose in Yaśodā. Instead her prema for Kṛṣṇa only increased, and continuing to see Him merely as a small child, she bathed Him in cow dung and cow urine for auspiciousness. Bhagavān is the personification of auspiciousness, yet to bring auspiciousness to Him, she sang some mantras and gave charity to the brāhmaṇas! Sanātana Gosvāmī says here in his commentary that if one hears these descriptions of Yaśodā endeavouring to bring auspiciousness to Kṛṣṇa, then very soon that same auspiciousness will come to that person. And if a sādhaṇa hears these

descriptions with love and deeply meditates on them, then his tendencies towards aiśvarya-bhāva will be blocked and he will be able to feel pure vātsalya-bhāva. Therefore any trace of aiśvarya-bhāva was covered by Yogamāyā, and Yaśodā was able to taste mādhyura-bhāva (where a devotee never considers Kṛṣṇa to be Bhagavān Himself, but merely their dear friend, son, or lover). Being wonderstruck, Parīkṣit Mahārāja is saying, “Aho! Yaśodā possesses even more good fortune than Nanda! Nanda is certainly fortunate - that is true; but Yaśodā is even more so because she was actually able to bind Kṛṣṇa, whereas Nanda could only later untie Him.”

In this verse Parīkṣit Mahārāja addresses Śukadeva Gosvāmī as ... brāhmaṇa , and Sanātana Gosvāmī says in his commentary that Śukadeva Gosvāmī is the direct embodiment of Parabrahma. Generally a devotee is not referred to in this way, but he has done it because here ...brahma means he who is speaking such a high level of hari-kathā that it increases the prema in others. The jīva is part and parcel of Parabrahma, but when he takes shelter of Parabrahma, then he experiences prema as a part of the whole. Because Śukadeva Gosvāmī increases that prema, he has been referred to here as the direct mūrti of Parabrahma.

Parīkṣit Mahārāja is asking, “Which auspicious activities did Nanda and Yaśodā perform to receive Kṛṣṇa as their son?” What activities did Prahlāda Mahārāja perform to receive such bhakti for Bhagavān? By unknowingly fasting and staying awake all night on Nṛsimha Catur-daśī, in his next life, while remaining in his mother’s womb, he heard bhagavat-tattva from Nārada for sixty thousand years, and after taking birth he became the great devotee Prahlāda Mahārāja. By keeping company with guru and Vaiṣṇavas one becomes like that. For us also: if we observe Janmāṣṭamī, Gaurā-pūrṇimā, or Nṛsimha-caturdaśī by fasting and hearing hari-kathā all day and serving guru and the Vaiṣṇavas with great enthusiasm and love - even if it is not for sixty thousand years or even sixty years, but only for sixty months or even sixty days - then that is sādhana.

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In the lives of all great devotees such as Rūpa and Sanātana this enthusiastic spirit can be seen. But being wonderstruck and feeling that it is impossible to perform such activities in this world which would bestow upon one the benediction of having Kṛṣṇa as their son, Parīkṣit Mahārāja is asking this question. He was completely astonished at the elevated vātsalya-prema which Yaśodā and Nanda possessed for Kṛṣṇa. Bhagavān has had many parents, but neither Vasudeva and Devakī, nor Daśaratha and Kauśalyā, nor Kaśyapa and Aditi possessed such a beautiful sentiment towards Him as did Yaśodā and Nanda. Vasudeva and Devakī were unable to taste the rasa of Kṛṣṇa's līlā; immediately after Kṛṣṇa's birth Vasudeva took Him to Gokula, and there His līlā began. On the first morning, Yaśodā was awakened by the sound of Kṛṣṇa crying, and then an immensely blissful festival was held. The news of Kṛṣṇa's birth spread in all directions, and people came from all over to see Him. The residents of Gokula tasted the rasa of Kṛṣṇa's bāla-līlā, but Vasudeva and Devakī were unable to taste even a little of it.

In their previous lives, Nanda was the Vasu demigod Droṇa and Yaśodā was his wife Dharā, and for the purpose of obtaining a very beautiful son they performed very severe austerities. After some time, Brahmā appeared before them and said, "You may ask any boon from me." They said, "Just as parents love a son, we want to have love like that towards Bhagavān." Brahmā said, "So it shall be." Sanātana Gosvāmī also says that Vasudeva and Devakī in their previous lives were Kaśyapa and Aditi, and they performed austerities until Bhagavān Himself appeared before them and said, "What do you desire?" They replied, "We desire a son like You." Bhagavān said, "There is no one like Me, so I Myself will become your son."

Bhagavān gave that boon Himself, and before this Brahmā had given that boon. But if Brahmā did not have vātsalya-prema himself, then how could he possibly give it? The answer is that Bhagavān protects the words of His devotees, but also, because Brahmā knows past, present, and future, he knew that Bhagavān would soon be taking birth in Gokula and performing

childhood pastimes, so he gave his boon to Droṇa and Dharā, and Bhagavān fulfilled his words and later came as their son.

Were Droṇa and Dharā ordinary jīvas? No; they were plenary portions of Nanda and Yaśodā who, for the purpose of showing the people of this world what type of sādhana is necessary to completely overpower Bhagavān, performed severe austerities to receive the boon of having Bhagavān as their son. Both Bhagavān and His devotees can give boons, but the devotee's boon will certainly be more powerful and more filled with rasa. Therefore Bhagavān fulfilled the boon given to Droṇa and Dharā, and in their next lives they appeared in their original forms as Nanda and Yaśodā and received Kṛṣṇa as their son.

In comparison to the boons given by Bhagavān Himself, the boon given by the devotee will be superior and bestow a higher taste. If Rāmacandra has taken a vow and Hanumān has also taken a vow, then if their vows conflict, whose vow will be triumphant? Once, seeing the offences of some man, Rāmacandrajī told him, "Tomorrow morning I shall come and certainly kill you." So who could possibly save him? There was no one who could save him. Later that day, as Nārada was walking along, he came across this man, and seeing his face, said, "My friend, what is wrong? Why does your face appear withered in despair?"

The man said, "Rāmacandra has vowed that tomorrow He will certainly kill me." Grasping Nārada's feet, he cried, "Prabhu, please protect me!"

Nārada said, "Me? I am not able to save you, but you can do one thing: go and grasp the feet of Hanumān, and don't let go! Don't tell him the reason you have grasped his feet, but just beg him to make a vow to always protect you. Then afterwards you may reveal to him the specific nature of your dilemma."

So this man approached Hanumān, and falling on the ground, grasped his feet and cried out, "O Prabhu! Please protect me, please protect me!"

Hanumān said, "Hey! What do you want? Let go of my feet!"



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“No Prabhu, I will never let go! Only when you vow to always protect me will I let go!”

“Alright, alright, I will always protect you, so what is it?”

“Rāmacandra has vowed that before the sun rises tomorrow morning He will certainly kill me.”

“Oh, I see! So who told you to do this? You must have met some intelligent man... or do you have a guru?”

“It was Nārada.”

This is Nārada’s nature, sometimes creating a quarrel between Bhagavān and His servants. So when the morning came, Hanumān told the man, “Just stand behind me, and everything will be alright.” Seeing that Rāma was coming, Hanumān picked up His club and assumed a fighting posture. Fixing an arrow to His bow, Rāma said, “Now I will kill this offender.”

Hanumān replied, “Prabhu, if You desire to kill him, it will only be over my dead body! I have vowed to always protect him.” Then Rāma retracted His vow, and honoured the vow of Hanumān. Amongst all of His qualities, Bhagavān’s special affection for His devotees is the supreme quality. Therefore He fulfilled the boon which Brahmā had given to Droṇa and Dharā.

We are more interested in taking shelter of Bhagavān’s parama-premī devotees. It is a special characteristic of those of us in the Gauḍīya sampradāya that we don’t actually take shelter of Kṛṣṇa. Even though He is the one who possesses all śakti, who is the unlimited ocean of rasa, who is supremely merciful, who is especially affectionate to His devotees, who is beginningless, and who is the cause of all causes, who is it that we take shelter of? Śrīmatī Rādhikā - and if we don’t directly take shelter of Her, then we take shelter of Lalitā or Viśākhā and aspire to become the dāsī of the dāsī of the dāsī of Rādhikā. We should always consider ourselves to be the devotee of the devotee of the devotee, and then Kṛṣṇa will be more pleased with us. He has said, “One who says that he is My devotee is not really My devotee. But he who says that he is the devotee of My devotee is more dear to Me.”

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Next comes this verse:

*tato bhaktir bhagavati*  
 putrī-bhūte janārdane  
 dam-patyor nitarām āsīd  
 gopa-gopīṣu bhārata

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.8.51 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
 2.7.127

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī replied, “O Bharata, for fulfilling the promise of His dear devotee Brahmā, the destroyer of evil, Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appeared as the son of Nanda and Yaśodā. In comparison to all of the other gopas and gopīs, this couple possessed the most love for Him.”

In this verse Śukadeva Gosvāmī addresses Parīkṣit Mahārāja as ...bhārata . The ordinary meaning is that Parīkṣit Mahārāja was the leader of his dynasty after the great war at Kurukṣetra, but the word bhārata can also be interpreted like this: ...bhā can mean ...bhāvati , and ...rata can mean ...rati . So since the actual meaning is he who has special rati or prema for the feet of Bhagavān, just see the respect Śukadeva Gosvāmī is giving him! This verse says that in Vraja there were a great many couples of gopas and gopīs who had offspring, and all of these couples had vātsalya-prema for Kṛṣṇa. Desiring to taste their parental love, Kṛṣṇa expanded into the cowherd boys and became their son for one year during which time He tasted that vātsalya-rasa, and so also did all of the parents as they nurtured Him. But amongst all of these couples, Yaśodā and Nanda still had stronger feelings of vātsalya for Him than anyone. The other couples loved Kṛṣṇa even more than their own sons, and only when He expanded into their sons during the Brahma-vimohana-līlā did they show equal affection to their own sons.

He also expanded into the calves so that the cows could taste vātsalya-rasa, and of course He was also the son of Devakī and Vasudeva. But as described in the previous verse, no one experienced the ecstasy which

Yaśodā did as Kṛṣṇa drank from her breasts. Devakī could have only experienced this for a few seconds, because immediately after Kṛṣṇa took birth He was taken to Gokula. At that time milk came to her breasts, and Kṛṣṇa was a small baby of a suitable age to drink her milk, but He was taken away. When Kṛṣṇa first appeared to them in the jail, with folded hands they had offered prayers; but later, when Kṛṣṇa returned to Mathurā and freed them, Kṛṣṇa covered their aiśvarya-bhāva by His Yogamāyā. He sat on Devakī's lap and cried "Mother, Mother!", but at that time she could not feed Him breast milk. Eleven years had elapsed, and the opportunity to breast-feed Kṛṣṇa had long passed.

So this verse says that this dam-patyor, this couple Yaśodā and Nanda, were superior to all the other couples of gopas and gopīs in Vraja. They experienced innumerable wonderful sentiments of parental love, but very few of them have actually been described in the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. The pastime where Dāmodara was bound by Yaśodā is described, and it also describes the time when Kṛṣṇa was very small He got up from Yaśodā's lap and began to crawl towards the door. But hearing some jingling sound, He turned around wondering where that sound was coming from, and was astonished to find that it was the jingling of His own ankle-bells. Then at once Yaśodā caught Him and placed Him back on her lap. Devakī never experienced any of this, and no other gopī in Vraja ever experienced so many feelings of vātsalya. The Bhāgavatam has described only a few of these pastimes, but Yaśodā felt countless millions of wonderful sentiments, such as when Kṛṣṇa played and when He drank her breast-milk. And to understand her elevated sentiments for Kṛṣṇa is very difficult.

When Uddhava visited Vṛndāvana, he saw Nanda and Yaśodā. Nanda was weeping bitterly, and Uddhava could not understand why he was crying. Even right up until the very end of his stay in Vraja he did not fully understand why Nanda was crying so bitterly. Uddhava thought, "Kṛṣṇa is Parabrahma, He cannot really be anyone's son! So towards Him, Nanda has such feelings? Is this some kind of illusion, or what? I know fully well that

Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavān, so how can I be attached to the idea that He is my friend?” Uddhava could only feel aiśvarya-bhāva towards Bhagavān, so seeing this bhāva in Nanda Bābā, he couldn’t understand it. This is how he felt coming before the great mountain of Nanda Bābā’s mādhyura-bhāva. When we look at a one-storey building, our head can be held level looking straight ahead. But when we look up at a seven-storey building, then we must tilt our head back slightly. And when we look up at a high mountain, we must tilt our heads back to the point where if we are wearing a hat, it will fall off. So looking up at the towering mountain of Nanda Bābā’s mādhyura-bhāva, it was as if Uddhava’s hat of aiśvarya-bhāva fell off! Being so intelligent, a paṇḍita, and a disciple of Bṛhaspati, still Uddhava couldn’t understand, “Why is he crying like this? This is certainly a matter of great good fortune, that Kṛṣṇa has appeared in his home! Okay, so Kṛṣṇa told me that I should give His parents some consolation. But what will I say? Will I say, ...Nanda Bābā, you are so fortunate! If there is any person in this entire universe who is fortunate, it is you! Please cry more and more! It is said that if even one tear is shed for Bhagavān, then one’s life has become completely successful! Devotees pray for the day when upon hearing descriptions of Bhagavān’s pastimes, taking His name, and seeing the places where He has performed His pastimes, they will shed tears and their voices will become so choked that they won’t even be able to pronounce His name properly! And here I see Nanda Bābā crying, and how is he crying? Very bitterly, like he will never stop!”

It is said that if someone sheds a tear out of love for Bhagavān, then their life will automatically become successful and they will become the purifier of the three worlds. In one place Uddhava has said:

*vande nanda-vraja-strīṇāṃ  
pāda-reṇum abhīkṣṇaśaḥ  
yāsāṃ hari-kathodgītāṃ  
punāti bhuvana-trayam*

“I repeatedly offer my respects to the dust from the feet of the women of Nanda Mahārāja’s cowherd village. When they loudly sing the glories of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the vibration purifies the three worlds.”

Why does their kathā purify the three worlds? The tearful, deeply emotional songs which they sang to one another became ślokaś in the Tenth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, and the scriptures say that when one attains the darśana of such a great personality who is crying in this way, one’s life becomes successful. But do we ever cry while describing Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes or while chanting His name? So tell me, then - how fortunate is Nanda Bābā to be crying, considering Kṛṣṇa to be his son?

So Uddhava was thinking, “Will I say, ...Nanda Mahārāja, you are most fortunate, so please cry more and more because by receiving your darśana today my life has become successful ? That will be like adding ghee to the fire! But if I say, ...Nanda Mahārāja, please don’t cry, be peaceful , then that will be opposed to what is said in the scriptures.” This was Uddhava’s curious predicament, and it was as if he were trapped. “If I tell him not to cry, it will be opposed to the words of the scriptures and I will be punished, and if I tell him to cry more, I will not be consoling him as Kṛṣṇa asked me to. Should I tell him to stop crying, or to cry even more?” He was unable to reach a decision, so in the end he mixed them both by saying, “Nanda Mahārāja, you are the most fortunate person, but please don’t cry.” In this way he was perplexed because Kṛṣṇa had instructed him to console His parents.

Sitting nearby was another fortunate soul, Yaśodā. Her tears had long dried up; the poor woman could not even shed tears. Her eyes were sunken in and she appeared like a skeleton. In one sense she died on the day Akrūra took Kṛṣṇa to Mathurā, and later she sent a message to Kṛṣṇa, “I don’t even have the qualification to call You ...my son . Now, having gone to Mathurā, You have accepted Devakī as Your mother and Vasudeva Mahārāja as Your father. For eleven years here, You were our very lives. As Your dhātri - the

one who raised You - I held You in my lap and protected You, and did everything one could expect from a dhātri. Koels lay their eggs in the nest of a crow, and then the crow sits on the eggs until they hatch. When they have hatched, then the mother koel returns and takes the chicks to her own nest and raises them there, and the crow just remains gazing in their direction. Our situation is exactly like that.”

Then Kṛṣṇa sent this message back to Yaśodā with Uddhava: “Because you have used the word dhātri to describe yourself, Baladeva and I should give up Our lives at once! I am sustaining My life solely to see you again; otherwise I would die today. We will certainly be returning to you soon, because besides you We don’t know any other mother. Therefore, Mother, please do one thing: Father will be crying, the cows and calves will be crying, the plants which I planted will be drying up, and the calves which we used to take out to graze will no longer be taken out and will begin dying. Please look after them a little; they will even give up eating out of separation from Me.” Seeing and hearing all of this, Uddhava was wonderstruck. Yaśodā was unable to speak; she could only softly stammer. The affection of Yaśodā for Kṛṣṇa, her vātsalyaprema, was unlimited, like a fathomless ocean. Uddhava was not able to give her any consolation. Our Gosvāmīs have not described much of this vātsalya-bhāva, because there are very few who are actually qualified to hear it. Therefore they have kept it hidden.

The word ...janārdane comes in this verse, and two meanings have been given for it. The one who destroys whatever is opposed to devotion and establishes bhakti is called Janārdana, and ...ardana can also mean a prayer. Therefore it can refer to Droṇa and Dharā, who prayed to Brahmā for receiving that Janārdana as their son, whose prayers were completely fulfilled, and who tasted the highest degree of vātsalya-bhāva. Nanda and Yaśodā’s bhāva is higher than the vātsalya-bhāva of all the other gopas and gopīs in Vraja, and this is the purport of this verse.

## Chapter Twelve

Mother Yaśodā’s Bhakti is Indescribable

Droṇa and Dharā's receiving Brahmā's boon of having parental love for Kṛṣṇa is similar to Kṛṣṇa's receiving the boon from Śaṅkara of having Sāmba as His son. At that time in Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa performed austerities for instructing people that by worshipping Śaṅkara, material wealth can be obtained. In reality no one can be Kṛṣṇa's son - Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Sāmba - they are all Bhagavān's plenary portions, but they appeared in the forms of His sons. Yaśodā and Nanda Bābā are the eternal parents of Kṛṣṇa, but for showing that some austerities are necessary to attain prema for Kṛṣṇa, the boon was given to Droṇa and Dharā. All of the Vaikuṇṭha incarnations are plenary portions of Nārāyaṇa, and in a similar way, Droṇa and Dharā, Vasudeva and Devakī, Daśaratha and Kauśalyā, and Kaśyapa and Aditi are all expansions of Nanda and Yaśodā. Still, amongst all of the eternal associates of Bhagavān, the eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa are the best.

*nandaḥ sva-putram ādāya proṣyāgata udāra-dhīḥ mūrdhny avaghrāya  
paramaṁ mudam lebhe kurūdvaha*

Śrīmad Bhāg. 10.6.43 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.128

“When magnanimous Nanda returned from Mathurā, he took his own son Śrī Kṛṣṇa on his lap and experienced immense pleasure by repeatedly smelling His head.”

Previously Nanda Bābā was very detached from worldly life, but after Kṛṣṇa was ...born , he became spellbound in attachment for Him. Before Kṛṣṇa's birth, Nanda Bābā never had any need to go to Kaṁsa's kingdom. But after His birth some money was necessary for His sustenance, and for this reason Nanda went to Mathurā. There he spoke to Vasudeva, who told him, “Please, you must return to Gokula quickly! The demons will now create a disturbance in all directions! Kaṁsa is determined to see that all children

born within the last ten days are killed. Therefore please return quickly!” As Nanda was returning to Gokula, he saw the massive corpse of Pūtanā beside the road, and being frightened for Kṛṣṇa’s welfare he hurried home.

Arriving there and seeing that Kṛṣṇa was alright, it was as if his very life had returned to his body. His previous feelings of detachment could not remain. Taking Kṛṣṇa on his lap, magnanimous Nanda Mahārāja time and again smelled his son’s head, saying, “Bhagavān has saved You from great danger!” Then he heard from his brother Upananda and others how the rākṣasī Pūtanā took Kṛṣṇa on her lap and forcibly put her breast in His mouth. She had applied poison to her breast, so how could Kṛṣṇa possibly have been saved? Next she flew up into the sky because Kṛṣṇa had latched onto her and would not let go, and she was thinking that if she could fly to where Kāṁsa was, Kāṁsa could separate Kṛṣṇa from her. She thought that in one minute only she could arrive there, but instead Kṛṣṇa sucked her breast with such force that He not only drank her poisoned breast-milk, but sucked out her very life. Hearing how Kṛṣṇa was saved from the hands of death, Nanda’s tears soaked Kṛṣṇa’s body.

In this verse is the word ...sva-putra , which means that Kṛṣṇa was Nanda’s own son, and also the word ...proṣyāgata , which means that Nanda was not the actual father of Kṛṣṇa, but the one who nurtured Him. Most people consider that Nanda Mahārāja was Kṛṣṇa’s proṣyāgata, and that His real parents were Vasudeva and Devakī. Vasudeva brought Kṛṣṇa to Gokula, and there Nanda raised Him. But Nanda Bābā trusted what he saw with his own eyes - that Kṛṣṇa had taken birth from the womb of Yaśodā in his own home. There was no doubt in his mind, but Vasudeva also had no doubt that Kṛṣṇa was his son. But if Kṛṣṇa had taken birth in Nanda’s home, then how could He have had loving affairs with the girls there, who are the daughters of Nanda’s brothers, and therefore would have been Kṛṣṇa’s cousins? How would this be possible? The gopīs are actually His hlādinī-śakti, but He first appeared in Mathurā to prevent the people of this world from saying, “Oh, He is performing rāsa with His own cousins!” So it is said that Kṛṣṇa is really



the son of Vasudeva, but this verse refers to Kṛṣṇa as Nanda's sva-putra, his own son. What could be greater evidence than this? "Nandaḥ sva-putram ādāya proṣyāga-ta udāra-dhīḥ": with natural, simple-hearted feelings of great fatherly affection, Nanda took his own son on his lap and nurtured Him. Here, the meaning of proṣyāgata is ...nurtured .

After the killing of Kāṁsa, Nanda remained waiting in his Mathurā residence and was feeling very unhappy. He was thinking, "More than twenty-four hours have passed since Kāṁsa was killed, and still neither Vasudeva nor anyone else such as Ugrasena or Akrūra has brought me any news. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma Themselves have also not come; because They are mere children that is alright, but why haven't any of the others come? I have heard that people are saying that They are actually the sons of Vasudeva." Because no one went to him with any news, Nanda Bābā was crying in solitude, thinking, "What will I do? Should I go to Vasudeva's palace to meet him, or what should I do?" Soon after dark, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva came alone to him. They saw that Their father was very sad, with his head hanging down in his hands. Sitting on his lap and lifting up his father's chin, Kṛṣṇa said, "Father, why are you sitting like this, alone and silent?"

Looking at Baladeva, Nanda said, "My son, why haven't You come earlier?"

Baladeva replied, "Father, a very strange thing is happening! Many people are saying that We are actually the sons of Vasudeva, but I don't accept this. Even if We are the sons of Vasudeva, We don't know any other father besides you! If for any reason a mother and father renounce a son, then those who raise him are really his mother and father. There are many different kinds of fathers: the one who begets you, the one who raises you, the king, the guru, the father-in-law, and the family priest. But amongst them, the best is he who raises and protects you, and therefore I am your son only, and I don't know any other father besides you. I don't want to remain here in Mathurā for even one more second; I want to immediately accompany you and Kṛṣṇa back to Vraja!"

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Nanda Bābā said, “My son, don’t speak like this! Hearing this, my younger brother Vasudeva will die, and Devakī will also die!” Nanda Bābā said this because he knew that they really would die, and therefore he is more magnanimous than Vasudeva and Devakī, who didn’t care as much about the vraja-vāsīs’s feelings while Kṛṣṇa stayed with them in Mathurā. He said to Baladeva, “Six of their sons were killed, and only with great difficulty were they able to save both of You. If You hadn’t been brought to Gokula, You would have also been slain. Therefore we are forever indebted to Vasudeva, so You remain here! I will take Kṛṣṇa and return to Gokula.”

Baladeva replied, “I will not be without Kṛṣṇa for even one second! I consider you to be My only father, and Kṛṣṇa to be My only brother!”

Then Nanda Bābā looked at Kṛṣṇa, because in His childhood Kṛṣṇa had given Nanda so much good advice. He asked Him, “What should I do?”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “Father, may I speak?”

“Yes, please.”

“In My opinion it would not be auspicious for Baladeva Prabhu to go to Vraja, leaving Vasudeva and Mother Devakī in such a difficult situation. And if I go, then He must go also. Therefore if you will give Us permission, We will stay here for a few days, and then later We will both return together.” What He was saying was having some influence on Nanda Bābā, but Nanda could only remain silent. Kṛṣṇa continued, “I am prepared to go with you now, but then everyone will say, ...Nanda Bābā is very cruel! Even after all of Vasudeva and Devakī’s children died, he took both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma away from them and returned to Gokula, leaving them to die also! So please don’t do this. Kāṁsa has now been killed, and we just need a few more days to complete Our work here by killing all the remaining demons. You please return home.”

Concerning this point, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says that a person will stay with whomever he receives the most affection from, whoever they are. Each and every jīva, even a dog, is hungry for love. It is true that Kṛṣṇa could not receive the prema of Vraja anywhere else. He was

not able to obtain even a fraction of the love which Yaśodā and Nanda had given Him in either Mathurā or Dvārakā, and the prema which the gopīs had for Him was so pure that He could not find anything like it anywhere else in the entire universe. So giving up that prema He went to Mathurā? Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura says, “We don’t have any faith in that. People may say that He left Vraja and went to Mathurā, but that can’t be so! He remained in Vraja in an unmanifest form. No one could see Him, but He was there.

“When Akrūra took Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva on the oxcart to Mathurā, it was actually Their expansions in the mode of aiśvarya as the sons of Devakī and Rohiṇī that went to Mathurā. They remained in Vraja in Their original forms, but no one knew of it. How was this possible? By the yogamāyā-śakti which makes the impossible possible.” Therefore Kṛṣṇa always remains in Vṛndāvana; this is the special conception given by our Gosvāmīs. If Kṛṣṇa was ever able to actually leave Vraja, then it would mean that the residents there didn’t love Him the most and that Kṛṣṇa didn’t love them the most, and neither of these ideas are possible. Therefore He never leaves Vṛndāvana.

What happened next? Kṛṣṇa began living in Mathurā, and all of the members of the Yadu dynasty returned. Due to fear of Kaṁsa’s atrocities they had fled, but after Kaṁsa’s death they returned to Mathurā and began living there again with great happiness. Meanwhile, Astī and Prāptī, the daughters of Jarāsandha who had married Kaṁsa, approached their father bewailing, “Your son-in-law was faultless! They threw him on the ground and killed him even though he did not fight back!” Becoming very angry, Jarāsandha attacked Mathurā seventeen times with very large armies. Kṛṣṇa was thinking, “Should I return to Vraja now?” But He was unable to go, because Vasudeva saw that Kṛṣṇa had not been properly educated; He knew only how to take cows out for grazing. So first he wanted to give Kṛṣṇa the saṁskāra of the sacred thread, and for this he called Gargācārya to his home.

Everyone, whether local or from distant places, was invited to the ceremony, but vraja-vāsīs like Nanda and his brother Upananda were

intentionally not invited. Taking advice from senior members of the dynasty like Uddhava and Akrūra, Vasudeva and Devakī had decided before in the assembly of Ugrasena that, “If the residents of Vraja are invited here for the ceremony, then the bhāva of Vraja will be stimulated inside Kṛṣṇa and He will certainly desire to return to Vraja with them. If that bhāva awakens inside Him, none of us will be able to check it, and therefore it is better not to invite them.” For the ceremony, Kṛṣṇa had His head shaved, leaving only a śikhā. Wearing wooden sandals and taking a staff, He assumed the full dress of a brahmacārī. Then Gargamuni gave Him the gāyatrīmantra and the sacred thread, and putting the cloth for begging alms around His neck, said, “My dear son, now beg some alms.”

Previously, in Vraja, Yaśodā had told Kṛṣṇa, “When You receive the sacred thread, we will fill Your begging cloth with jewels.” Now Kṛṣṇa remembered that occasion, and in that great assembly He anxiously started looking in all directions, “Where is My mother?” At the ceremony, Devakī was fully decorated in her best attire, sitting in the front to give Kṛṣṇa alms. And Kṛṣṇa was anxiously looking around, “Where is My mother? Where is My mother?” But not seeing her, acute remembrance of Yaśodā came to Him, and He thought, “My mother, somewhere in Nanda-bhavana, will be standing alone by the door. Sometimes she will be looking inside the house, and sometimes she will be looking outside. She will be crying, not knowing where I am and wondering, ...What is my son doing at this moment? And here I am, accepting this sacred thread amidst a joyous celebration.”

Crying out, “Mother! Mother!” Kṛṣṇa fell to the ground, unconscious. All of the excitement of the occasion and the giving and taking of alms immediately stopped, and everyone ran to Kṛṣṇa and lifted Him up. Witnessing this spectacle, the members of the Yadu dynasty said, “Just see how strong His attachment is to Vraja! He should be sent far away for His education! He should be sent to Ujjain, and there He can start strictly following His vows and the instructions of His guru. He will stay there as long as the guru sees fit, and then upon returning here, His nature will have

changed, and He will understand that He is really the son of Vasudeva.” So they sent Him there.

Somehow the vraja-vāsīs came to know of all this and said, “Considering Him to be their own son, they have given Him the sacred thread? Forcibly they have made Him a kṣatriya through the sacred thread ceremony? And they have cruelly sent Him to Ujjain to receive His education from Sāndīpani Muni? Wearing horizontal markings on his forehead, Sāndīpani Muni is a brahmavādī worshipper of Śaṅkara! Why have they sent Kṛṣṇa to him?” Yogamāyā had made the arrangement that Kṛṣṇa be sent to Sāndīpani, because if He had been sent to a Vaiṣṇava, the Vaiṣṇava would have recognised Him. Therefore He was sent to a devotee of Śiva who would not recognise Him, and His identity would not be revealed. Kṛṣṇa was sent to Ujjain, and in sixty-four days He learned sixty-four arts.

When He returned from there He sent Uddhava to Vraja. After speaking with Uddhava, one of the gopīs began speaking to a bee, considering it to also be a messenger from Kṛṣṇa:

*api bata madhu-puryām ārya-putro dhunāste  
smarati sa pīṭṛ-gehān saumya bandhūṁś ca gopān  
kvacid api sa kathā naḥ kiṅkarīṇāṁ grṇīte  
bhujam aguru-sugandham mūrdhny adhāsyat kadā nu*

Śrīmad-Bhāg.  
10.47.21

“Now that Kṛṣṇa has completed His studies at the āśrama of Sāndīpani, will He be coming here? Certainly He won’t be able to stay in Mathurā! Is He on the road coming here right now? He told Me over two months ago that He will be returning ...the day after tomorrow , but still He has not come. Does He ever remember us at any time? Does He remember us as those who string wonderful flower garlands for Him? Does He remember, ...Oh, the gopīs beauty defeats that of even the most beautiful women in the world! ?

Does He ever remember us in that way? Or does He remember us even in a derogatory manner? ...Oh, yes, those gopīs are foolish girls who work with milk products and don't know anything. When He hears a song or sees some dancing, does He remember us and the sentiments we shared, the prema of His insignificant dāsīs? When will He return and make us fearless by placing His aguru-scented hands on our heads, and putting His long arms around our necks as He did during the rāsa-līlā?" Similarly Nanda Bābā and all the residents of Vraja had extremely strong feelings for Kṛṣṇa from His very childhood, and although He didn't send them any news from Mathurā or Dvārakā, in the end, when it was the appropriate time for sūrya-pūjā at Kurukṣetra after the war there, without being called, Nanda Bābā, Yaśodā, the gopīs, and all the residents of Vraja went there and at last met Him again.

In the verse we are discussing, it says ...sva-putram . The word ...sva , meaning "one's own", is used because otherwise the word ...putra could mean that Kṛṣṇa was the adopted son of Nanda. So this verse says "Taking his own son" - not taking the son of Vasudeva - "he repeatedly embraced and kissed Him." And because of his great affection for Kṛṣṇa, Nanda experienced paramaṁ, that supreme ānanda which even Vasudeva never felt. Or another meaning of "para-maṁ mudam" can be that Nanda felt that ānanda which even Mahā-Lakṣmī, who is worshipable by all devotees, could not attain.

...Udāra-dhīḥ - Nanda Bābā was very generous and magnanimous. On the day of Kṛṣṇa's birth festival, he gave cows, jewels, cloth, and everything he had in charity to the brāhmaṇas. ...Udāra can also mean greatly intelligent. If he hadn't been highly intelligent, he wouldn't have asked Brahmā only for the boon of having that most elevated vātsalya-prema for Bhagavān. He didn't ask for an ordinary son, nor did he even ask to have Bhagavān as his son, but he asked only for bhagavad-bhakti. This is the proper yearning - begging for bhakti, for prema. The ācāryas in our sampradāya don't consider

that obtaining Kṛṣṇa is the ultimate objective; they consider that obtaining kṛṣṇa-prema is the ultimate objective. Especially the kṛṣṇa-prema of the vraja-vāsīs, and within that, especially the prema of the gopīs. And within that, the prema of Rādhā has been emphasised - to have prema for Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā-vallabha.

Nanda begged only for bhagavad-bhakti, not for having a son. Vasudeva prayed, “We desire a son like You” but Nanda prayed, “We desire to have vātsalya-prema for You.” When Brahmā had offered the boon to Droṇa and Dharā, Droṇa said, “Please first ask my wife what she desires.” Dharā replied, “When Parabrahma Himself takes birth in this world and performs His wonderful humanlike pastimes, we desire to have parama-bhakti for Him.”

Both a mother and father will love their son, but the mother will love him more. The mother actually nurtures the child, while the father provides all the necessities such as clothing and food. If during the night the father’s sleep is broken by the child’s crying for even one moment, he may desire to even put the child outside of the house! But the mother will stay awake all night if necessary feeding the child milk, comforting him, and lulling him back to sleep. The mother is ready to face any hardship, and therefore she looks after the child in a way which is not possible for the father.

Nanda once went to Mathurā to meet with Vasudeva concerning the taxes which had to be given to Kaṁsa, and one full day elapsed before he returned to Vraja. But Yaśodā couldn’t tolerate being away from Kṛṣṇa for even one moment, and therefore Yaśodā’s affection for Kṛṣṇa was greater than that of Nanda. When Uddhava visited Vraja, Nanda Bābā was able to converse with him a little, but Yaśodā could not. She couldn’t possibly have spoken in her condition; she was simply lying on the ground nearby and bitterly weeping.

When Brahmā stole the cowherd boys and calves, Kṛṣṇa assumed all of their forms for one year and drank the milk of the motherly gopīs and cows. Describing the glories of those motherly gopīs and cows is very difficult, so what to speak of describing the glories of Yaśodā? With great prema she fed

Kṛṣṇa milk for the entire time He was residing in Vṛndāvana, and her glories are unlimited and unfathomable. If someone attains even a small particle of bhakti for Kṛṣṇa, then they feel that their lives have become completely fulfilled. So what to speak of Yaśodā? I don't know if we even have the courage to attempt to describe her bhakti.

After Kṛṣṇa left Vṛndāvana for Mathurā, Mother Yaśodā stopped doing all housework. The kitchen remained unclean, all the pots were upside-down, and there were cobwebs everywhere. Who would she cook for? When Kṛṣṇa was present, with great delight she would cook for Him, but she felt that with Kṛṣṇa gone there was no one to cook for. She began displaying the characteristics of someone who is approaching old age, and on one very hot afternoon, when she was feeling particularly unhappy, remembrance of so many of Kṛṣṇa's childhood pastimes began coming to her, and she was at once submerged in bhāva. Inside the house were Kṛṣṇa's clothing and many of His toys, like toy cows and tiny bamboo flutes. She collected all of these in a cloth sack and leaving the house, began to walk away. Then one of her friends who lived nearby approached her and said, "Sakhī, where are you going?" Seeing that she was going somewhere, others gathered around her and asked, "Mother, where are you going?" Previously she was unable to even speak; whenever she would desire to speak, she would just become choked up with emotion and could only cry. But now she said, "I am going to wherever my Kanhaiyā is."

"What? Where is your Kanhaiyā? This is Nandagrāma, and He is in Mathurā! It is an extremely hot afternoon, the hot sun is bearing down, and the ground will certainly burn your feet, so how will you go anywhere?"

"I cannot live without Him."

"So going to Mathurā, then what will you do?"

"I will go there, and arriving in the reception room, I will say, ...I desire to meet Queen Devakī. And if someone brings me to Devakī, then I will fall at her feet and say, ...I will become your dāsī birth after birth. I will serve your child - He is not my child - and I will cook for you both. I will become your



maidservant for all time. Please keep me in your palace, where I will eat only your remnants and always serve you. That is all I desire. ” Saying that, she became overwhelmed with emotion and fell down right there; she had that much love for Bhagavān in the form of her son!

The Vraja devotees have the highest level of love for Kṛṣṇa. Their love never comes and goes as the love in this world does; they are all eternal associates of Kṛṣṇa, and their prema is like a fathomless ocean. On rainy days, even though the rivers swell and flow even stronger towards the ocean, the ocean itself never swells. And on dry days it never diminishes; so for the fathomless ocean, swelling and diminishing never occurs. It is the same with the love of these devotees, and Nanda and Yaśodā’s prema for Kṛṣṇa is always taking new and variegated forms.

Chapter Thirteen  
Mother Yaśodā Binds Kṛṣṇa

*sa mātuh svinna-gātrāya visrasta-kavara-srajaḥ dṛṣṭva pariśramam kṛṣṇaḥ  
kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.9.18 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.129

“When Kṛṣṇa saw Yaśodā labouring so desperately that her whole body was dripping with perspiration and the flower garland which was entwined in her hair braid was falling down, He mercifully allowed Himself to be bound by her.”

Sanātana Gosvāmī says that in describing the life of Yaśodā, Śukadeva Gosvāmī became joyful and astonished. The vātsalya of Yaśodā is more special than anyone else’s, and even more special than Nanda’s because Kṛṣṇa is not completely overpowered by anyone else’s parental affection the way He is by hers. Kṛṣṇa is the one who unties the bindings of this material universe, even for those who approach Him in the mood of an enemy. He is the giver of the five types of liberation: sāyujya, sālōkya, sāmīpya, sārṣṭi, and

sārūpya, and above these He gives the type of special mukti known as prema. That prema He gave even to Pūtanā, who approached Him in the guise of a mother to kill Him. She was given a motherly position in Goloka even though she was an enemy, and her relatives Aghāsura and Bakāsura, even though they were also enemies, were given sālókya. Yet here we find that very giver of liberation Himself being bound by Yaśodā; just see what a pastime this is!

Outside her house beneath a large pot filled with milk Yaśodā lit a fire fuelled by cowdung, and the smoke was rising in all directions. Then she returned to churning butter. It was early morning, the day after Dīvālī, and while going about their morning duties, all of the household servants were remembering and singing about Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. At that time Kṛṣṇa woke up, and not seeing His mother, He got up from His bed and began crying loudly. When Yaśodā looked over and saw the small, naked boy, she took Him in her lap and began to feed Him milk. At that time, she felt such strong waves of ānanda that tears fell from her eyes and milk came to her breasts. There was not even any need for Kṛṣṇa to suck the milk out; automatically it flowed and Kṛṣṇa drank without effort.

Meanwhile Yaśodā saw that the milk she had placed on the fire was boiling over, so she immediately got up and ran there. Before she wanted only to take Kṛṣṇa in her lap and feed Him, yet now her immediate concern was the milk - it was boiling over and would not wait. At that moment she was not thinking about whether Kṛṣṇa was satisfied or not, and even though Kṛṣṇa was grasping her with both His hands and His mouth, leaving Him behind she got up to see to the milk. The powerful rākṣasī Pūtanā tried desperately to escape the grasp of that same Kṛṣṇa, but could not. She even flew into the sky and tried to fly back to Mathurā, but Kṛṣṇa clutched her breast with such ferocity that she fell to the ground. Effortlessly Kṛṣṇa was able to hold onto Pūtanā, yet when Kṛṣṇa desired that "Mother will not leave Me!" and He even applied all of His śakti, still she went to look after the milk and left Him sitting there. Becoming very angry, Kṛṣṇa began crying and His eyes became

red. Biting His lip as children do, He thought, “Mother left Me and didn’t feed Me milk?” and He picked up a stone and broke the butter pot.

Yaśodā was saying to the milk, “Don’t boil over! I need you to prepare sweets for Kṛṣṇa!” But the milk may have been feeling, “What do you need me for? What is the nature of Kṛṣṇa’s stomach? It can never really be filled. But neither can your milk supply ever be exhausted; Kṛṣṇa could keep drinking it forever and it would never run out. Therefore my own life is worthless. If I will never be able to satisfy Kṛṣṇa, then I will give up my life by boiling over into the fire.”

Seeing that the milk had risen and was boiling over, Yaśodā said to it, “Don’t give up your life! I need you to prepare sweets for Kṛṣṇa!” After sprinkling some water on the milk to prevent it from boiling over, Yaśodā returned and found the broken butter pot. Not seeing Kṛṣṇa, she searched and searched until she noticed His footprints leading in the direction of the house, and she laughed to herself as she saw Him feeding some yoghurt to the monkeys and taking some Himself. She thought, “Kṛṣṇa is a real friend of these monkeys! I should discipline Him for this, but it would spoil the fun. And besides, until now I have not done such a thing.” So laughing a little, she picked up a stick to frighten Him and quietly hid so He wouldn’t know she was watching. She thought, “If He looks this way and comes to know that I am watching, then I will have to at once run to catch Him.” And Kṛṣṇa was also alert, thinking, “If Mother or anyone comes, I must run away at once.”

Yaśodā saw that there was a group of crows there along with the monkeys. All of them were previously in rāma-līlā - the crows were from the dynasty of Kākubhuṣaṇḍī, and the monkeys were from the dynasty of Hanumān and Sugrīva. Kṛṣṇa was indebted to all of them, so He was feeding them. The crows were below catching the drops of yoghurt which fell to the ground, and the monkeys were beside Kṛṣṇa taking the yoghurt directly with their hands. At first she laughed, but then, very slowly, like a cat, she approached Him, and He - whose very name pushes away the influence of māyā for the people of this world and saves them from seeing the Yamadūtas - looked at her with

fearful eyes. Who could He be afraid of? Was He afraid of Kaṁsa? Some say that He went to Gokula out of fear of Kaṁsa, but really He went there to taste prema. He is never afraid of anyone, yet seeing Yaśodā He jumped down and ran away.

Yaśodā ran after Him, and we also desire to catch Bhagavān by our bhakti, yet unlike her, we cannot catch Him. “So many days have passed, and every day I have engaged in chanting harināma. Yet as of today I still have no direct experience of Bhagavān. My heart has not melted and I have never shed tears for Him, and I have never felt ecstasy while taking harināma. How will my heart become changed? I can see no light at the end of the tunnel or anything. How will I ever attain bhakti?” We should consider these things. As long as even a little mundane vision remains within us, we won’t be able to catch Him. By realisation of the subtle plane we won’t catch Him, and by realisation of the nirguṇa plane we won’t catch Him. Our mentality must be like that of the vraja-vāsīs such as Yaśodā and the other gopīs, and then we will be able to catch Him; otherwise not. But we are also running after Him; we also possess some eagerness. Perhaps we have performed some sacrifice in the service of our guru and when we hear hari-kathā we get some devotional feelings, but do we possess that prema which overpowers Bhagavān? Even the pure-hearted yogīs in their samādhi cannot catch a glimpse of Bhagavān’s shadow!

Yaśodā is really giving chase to Kṛṣṇa - on foot, not by the speed of mind. That is another thing. She is not pursuing Him by the speed of mind but on foot, and trying to catch Kṛṣṇa in His manifest form. Sometimes she would come near Him, and again He would give her the slip, and like this He was playing with His mother. If we possessed such bhakti by which we could come near Kṛṣṇa, then would it be easy to catch Him? It would still be very difficult. Even in “coming near Him”, how far away would we still be? Even though He is always near, present inside our hearts, we are not seeing Him there. Yaśodā sees Him, chases after Him, and catches Him, but what about us? We don’t perform the required sādhana or bhajana to catch Him. We will

only catch Him when we have sufficient eagerness within us, but first the urges for mundane pleasure must be completely forgotten. Kṛṣṇa is running and Yaśodā is also running, but she will have to run twice as fast as Kṛṣṇa to catch Him.

Sugrīva's brother Vāli worshipped Sūrya by performing austerities, and then Sūrya appeared before him and asked, "What boon do you desire?" Vāli said, "I desire the boon that whenever anyone comes before me to fight, I will keep all of my own strength and also take half of my opponent's strength." One day after having received this boon, Vāli was at a river offering pūjā to Sūryadeva when Rāvaṇa approached him. Rāvaṇa thought that he was the strongest person in the entire universe, and with his twenty hands began disturbing Vāli by splashing water on him. But Vāli simply continued offering his pūjā with only one hand and with the other he grabbed hold of Rāvaṇa and held him underneath his armpit. Vāli didn't even look at Rāvaṇa, like one who has killed a mosquito on his back.

Besides Bhagavān no one could kill Vāli, and even then, Bhagavān had to use some trickery to kill him. Rāma killed him from a hidden position. Otherwise, if He had gone before Vāli, Vāli would have taken half of His strength and Rāma would have also been defeated! In a similar way, we can see that for catching Kṛṣṇa, double speed is necessary; then He can be caught. ...Double-speed means that our own sincere efforts must be there, and Kṛṣṇa's mercy must also be upon us. He loves all jīvas, but we must love Him twice as much, and then we can catch Him.

Sometimes Kṛṣṇa remembers His own bhagavattā (nature as the Supreme), but all the time Yaśodā loves Him with the idea that He is merely an ordinary child, and she gives her everything to Him. In this stage of prema there may appear to be even more affection for the beloved's possessions than for the beloved himself. We may have great devotion to our father, but then if we put on our father's sandals and wear them ourselves, is that real devotion, or not? We should respect the sandals of our father as much as we respect him, just as Bharata served the wooden sandals of Rāmacandra.

That is the correct outlook, that is really prema. But if we are indifferent to the possessions of our beloved that is not prema, and if we use them for our own enjoyment that is not prema. Kṛṣṇa's cloth, His flute, His toys, milk and butter that are meant for Him - a real devotee will sometimes appear to have more love for these things because they are dear to Kṛṣṇa.

With great love Yaśodā feeds Kṛṣṇa milk, so does she have more affection for Kṛṣṇa Himself, or for the milk? Of course for Kṛṣṇa, but if the milk becomes spoiled in some way, she will be very upset. She thinks, "If Kṛṣṇa takes this milk, He will live a long, healthy life. From this milk I will make sandeśa, rabaī, khīra, malpura, and so many delectable preparations to feed Kṛṣṇa." At other times, when Mother Yaśodā makes Kṛṣṇa some beautiful new silken clothes and after dressing Him in them He goes outside and plays in some nearby mud, then, seeing Him, Yaśodā says, "Hey! Look what you've done to Your new clothes!" Then Kṛṣṇa thinks, "Does Mother have more love for Me, or for My clothes?" Therefore devotees may sometimes show even more regard for Kṛṣṇa's paraphernalia than for Kṛṣṇa Himself; that is one symptom of prema. And what are Kṛṣṇa's dearest possessions but His devotees? This is why even after performing bhajana for thousands of lifetimes those who don't respect His devotees will attain absolutely nothing.

Therefore Yaśodā went to protect the milk so that it would not be wasted, and when Kṛṣṇa broke the butter pot she ran after Him to correct Him. Lifting her stick, she said, "Alright - now I will hit You!"

Frightened, Kṛṣṇa replied, "Mother, don't hit Me!"

"Tell me then - why did You break the pot?"

"I didn't break it!"

"Then who did?"

"You must have accidentally broken it as you ran by! You were not completely to your senses!"

Then Yaśodā became more angry and said, "And why are You stealing? There are no thieves on my side of the family! You are the only thief in our family!" Again Kṛṣṇa ran off, and again she lifted up her stick and chased

Him. As she was running, her hair loosened and she was becoming fatigued, but she was determined to catch Him. Finally with the help of some of the household servants He was caught, and she brought Him inside the house. “Now shall I hit You, restless friend of the monkeys? You steal from the homes of others as well as Your own house! Do You think that’s good?”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “Mother, don’t hit Me! There is no purpose in hitting Me!”

So she put down the stick and said, “Alright, I will bind You instead.” So she took the rope from her loosened hair and tried to bind Him. His thin waist was so nicely decorated with golden ornaments, and applying the rope to it, she found that the rope was short. She said to the gopīs, “Bring more rope!” But adding more rope Kṛṣṇa still could not be bound. Yogamāyā saw that, “My master does not desire to be bound now.” Therefore Kṛṣṇa’s waist remained the same size, but by the influence of Yogamāyā the rope was always two finger lengths short. Because she still did not have sufficient determination, Yaśodā couldn’t wrap it all the way around even once, and everyone was astonished.

What difficulty should there be in binding such a thin waist? It is like those of us who are presently practicing sādhana-bhajana. In general we believe that Bhagavān is very merciful, but sometimes our faith becomes weak. “Is there really so much śakti in the name of Bhagavān, or not? Can it really bestow bhakti, or not? Will I ever meet Bhagavān?” If in the midst of the process of taking harināma all of one’s difficulties are not eradicated, he may begin to think, “Is Bhagavān there, or not?” He may feel that he has attained nothing, that his unhappiness has not been mitigated, his poverty has not been eradicated, and after doing bhajana his whole life, he may merely die crying in disappointment. Rather we should continue chanting with such good quality faith that we will always be thinking, “My endeavour will certainly be successful.”

But sometimes our determination is not firm, and many sādhakas fall into the trap of again becoming involved in enjoying māyā, thinking, “I will work

hard, make lots of money, build a house, and live comfortably,” but they forget that one day they will have to die and leave it all behind. At first Yaśodā thought that she would easily wrap the rope around Kṛṣṇa’s waist, but did it happen? Similarly, when we first take up devotional life we think that attaining Bhagavān will not be difficult; but recognising the reality of it, we should never become despondent. Many devotees become despondent, but we should always remain eager and determined.

After some time, the gopīs were wonderstruck, and especially Yaśodā’s astonishment knew no limit as they saw that thousands of ropes had been joined together but still this small child could not be bound. Yaśodā thought, “From early morning until now I have been trying to bind Him! The rope has become so long, and still it won’t wrap around Him even once. Every time it is two finger lengths short. Not one, three, four, or five finger lengths short, but every time it is precisely two finger lengths short! Why is this?”

There were two reasons for the rope being short. First, Yogamāyā saw that Kṛṣṇa did not desire to be bound, so Kṛṣṇa’s sanction was not present, and second, there was not sufficient eagerness in Yaśodā. There is the kṛpā of Kṛṣṇa and a devotee’s eagerness for bhajana. When they both come together, one will meet Bhagavān and overpower Him with prema. As long as Yaśodā was not sufficiently eager, she could not bind Him. But then she became more determined, thinking, “This is my own small child, and standing before all of my friends I am unable to bind Him? Now I will certainly bind Him, or else I might as well give up my life!” She began perspiring and her face became red, and kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane - seeing her endeavour to bind Him, Kṛṣṇa’s heart melted. The influence of Yogamāyā withdrew, and at last He allowed her to bind Him.

Sanātana Gosvāmī says here that there are two types of devotees: those who desire to attain Bhagavān by the practice of sādhana-bhajana, and those who rely solely on the kṛpā of Kṛṣṇa. Mahāprabhu said that both are necessary. Kittens don’t need to make any effort; the cat feeds them and nurtures them and carries them everywhere in her mouth, and all the kittens



do all day and night is merely cry “meow, meow.” But baby monkeys have to hold onto their mothers themselves; otherwise they will be finished. When the mother is ready to cross from one roof or tree to another, at once the baby monkey runs over and holds on around her stomach or on her back and is carried across. She never grabs the babies herself, and if they don’t grab onto her, she goes without them, thinking, “What good are such useless offspring anyway?”

So which is the primary consideration here concerning sādhana or kṛpā? Mahāprabhu said that both are primary. No one can actually bind Bhagavān by the strength of their sādhana, but by endeavouring more and more until such great determination comes that all of one’s bodily needs and worldly attachments are forgotten, then Bhagavān’s heart will melt and He will bestow special mercy. Bhagavān’s kṛpā is upon all jīvas at all times, but not that special mercy by which He can actually be bound. He only gives that upon seeing the intense endeavour of His devotees, like the vairāgya of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. How did he perform bhajana, day and night? The Gosvāmīs would live outdoors in the jungle, such as at Nandagrāma, or near Pāvana-sarovara where a cool breeze is always blowing. They would reside beneath trees, and nearby were snakes, scorpions, and many different kinds of jungle animals. They ate very little and performed extremely strict bhajana.

By that kind of bhajana one can meet Bhagavān, but where is such strictness and intensity in our bhajana? With great comfort we are eating and drinking, and we possess quilts, pillows, and cādaras. On cold days we have plenty of hot food to eat, and there is never any deficiency in our sleeping. Therefore Bhagavān’s kṛpā is upon us, the kṛpā of the Vaiṣṇavas is upon us, but it is our misfortune that we don’t have the same intensity as the Gosvāmīs.

Wonderstruck and experiencing ecstatic symptoms in his description of the glories of Yaśodā, next Śukadeva Gosvāmī experienced these feelings arising in his heart:

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*nemaṁ viriṣco na bhavo na śrīr apy aṅga-saṁśrayā prasādaṁ lebhire gopī  
yat tat prāpa vimuktidāt*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.9.20 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.130

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“Neither Brahmā, Śiva, or even Lakṣmīdevī - who eternally resides at Kṛṣṇa’s chest in the form of a golden line - have ever received as much mercy as Yaśodā did from He who is the bestower of liberation.”

Although being Bhagavān’s own son, still, even Brahmā didn’t attain as much mercy as Yaśodā did. Brahmā was born from the lotus of Bhagavān’s navel. Generally a father is most munificent to his son regardless of the son’s nature - whether he is a criminal or whatever. And usually the son is made the father’s heir in all respects, but even such a highly qualified son as Brahmā did not receive the mercy which Yaśodā did. Coming to Vraja, Brahmā saw, “First this aparādhī Aghāsura tried to swallow Kṛṣṇa, and then I saw Kṛṣṇa give mukti to him! I saw a light leave Aghāsura’s body, fly up into the sky, and then merge into Kṛṣṇa’s feet! That was no ordinary light; it was certainly Aghāsura’s ātmā!”

Many were not able to recognise the divine symptoms of Kṛṣṇa and only saw Him as an ordinary human being. As Kṛṣṇa prepared to leave this world and return to Goloka in His form as Dvārakādhīśa, what did the ordinary people see? That Kṛṣṇa was shot by a hunter’s arrow, He began to bleed, and He died right there. Others saw a light come out of Kṛṣṇa’s body and go into the sky. Brahmā, Śaṅkara, and others saw Kṛṣṇa return to Goloka in His selfsame form as His eternal associates offered Him prayers. And what did the higher devotees of Dvārakā see? That Kṛṣṇa didn’t go anywhere; He always remains in Dvārāka. So according to their different levels of inner development, people saw Him in different ways.

When Brahmā saw Kṛṣṇa’s pastime of giving liberation to Aghāsura, he became very astonished and thought, “How can I see more pastimes like

this?” Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa remembered that He wanted to Himself become all of those cowherd boys and calves, so here was the opportunity to accomplish all of His objectives in one pastime. In this pastime He could marry all of the gopīs, because if He had kept relationships with them otherwise, the people of mundane consciousness would have criticised Him. Next Yogamāyā sent inspiration into the heart of Brahmā and he thought, “Let me see what will happen next if I steal the cowherd boys and calves.”

In the end, seeing how Kṛṣṇa Himself expanded into all of the cowherd boys and calves, how all of their sticks and blankets and everything appeared as four-armed Nārāyaṇas, and how so many demigods were offering Them prayers, he became wonderstruck and immediately fell down like a stick at Kṛṣṇa’s feet. Then he looked again, and everything had disappeared, and only the original form of Kṛṣṇa remained, standing in His threefold-bending posture and smiling.

“Na-bhavo” - Śaṅkara also did not receive as much mercy as Yaśodā did. And who is Śaṅkara? He and Hari are one and the same soul. For the purpose of showing the ideal standard of worshipping Śaṅkara to the residents of this world, Kṛṣṇa once worshipped Śaṅkara. Brahmā may become offended, but Śaṅkara never accepts any offense. And Kṛṣṇa assigns Śaṅkara very difficult tasks, even up to bewildering the jīvas in his incarnation as Śaṅkarācārya and Śaṅkara always fulfils those tasks. Therefore he is certainly the recipient of Kṛṣṇa’s mercy, but not the ...prasāda, the special mercy which is spoken of in this verse.

“Na śrīr” - and not even Lakṣmī, who always resides at the Lord’s chest and who performed austerities and pūjā at Belavana, received such mercy as Yaśodā did. Vimuktidāt: Kṛṣṇa is the giver of liberation. He bestows upon some the destination of Vaikuṇṭha, and upon others even the destination of Goloka-Vṛndāvana, but to Yaśodā He gave that special mercy which was not given to anyone else and by which He Himself becomes bound.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Pūrva-rāga or Preliminary Attraction

*gopīnām paramānanda*  
āśīd govinda-darśane  
kṣaṇam yuga-śatam iva  
yāsām yena vinābhavat

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.19.16 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.133

“The vraja-gopīs would enjoy supreme pleasure from receiving the darśana of Śrī Govinda, but they would consider even one moment of His absence to be like one hundred yugas.”

Kṛṣṇa and the sakhās had taken the cows out to graze in the Muṣjāraṇya forest when a fire started, and like a chariot driver the wind carried that fire until it surrounded the boys and cows on all sides. Then the sakhās called out, “Kṛṣṇa! Baladeva! Save us!” Seeing that they were threatened, Kṛṣṇa said, “Just close your eyes!” and He opened His mouth and consumed the fierce fire. Then He told them that they could open their eyes; if they had witnessed His swallowing that great fire they would have been terrified. But the sakhās saw that everything was just as it was before and that the cows were calmly resting under the Bhāṇḍīra tree. They thought, “How is it that we are here? Everything was just burning! Was that just a dream, or was it real?” And then they all began blissfully taking their lunch together.

In the same way, when by the cultivation of bhagavad-bhajana and the mercy of guru and Bhagavān we become free from the burning suffering of the material energy, we will think, “Was it just a dream, or was it real?” Upon the eradication of that pain which had been tormenting us since time immemorial, we will think, “Where has it gone, as if in the snap of a finger? Was it real?” We really won’t be able to remember.

After this Kṛṣṇa led the cows back to Vraja, and the gopīs were thirsty for His darśana, and that is the time being described in this verse spoken by

Śukadeva Gosvāmī. When He came before them, their ānanda increased. Although they had not yet established a relationship with Him through either seeing Him or hearing about Him, they were very attracted to Him, and this is called pūrva-rāga. It can exist in both the viṣaya or supreme object of love - Kṛṣṇa, and in the āśraya or the supreme receptacle of love - the gopīs.

To feel this pūrva-rāga in the stage of sādhana is not easy; the pūrva-rāga which has been described in the writings of Vidyāpati, Caṇḍīdāsa, and in the Gopī-gīta and other places in the Bhāgavatam cannot be attained by an ordinary sādhaka. Only when one has attained svarūpasiddhi - meaning when in the stage of bhāva one attains perception of his eternal svarūpa - will such restlessness for the sight of Kṛṣṇa be felt. Only a very few devotees, like Bilvamaṅgala, have felt these kind of sentiments in the selfsame lifetime. But kṣaṇam yuga-śatam iva - feeling a moment of Kṛṣṇa's absence to be like millenniums - what is the nature of this sentiment? Although here it is pūrva-rāga, it can also be mahābhāva, as in this verse:

*yugāyitaṁ nimeṣeṇa  
cakṣuṣā prāvṛṣāyitaṁ  
śūnyaīyitaṁ jagat sarvaṁ  
govinda-virahaṇa me*

Śrī  
Śikṣāṣṭaka  
7

“O sakhī, in separation from Govinda, even one second seems like millenniums. Tears are flowing from My eyes like clouds showering torrents of rain, and the entire world appears empty.”

This is also mahābhāva; it is not an ordinary sentiment. Caṇḍīdāsa has written:

*sai! kebā sunāile śyāma nāma?  
kānera bhitara diyā marama pasila go*

Although outwardly it is on the order of Nanda and Yaśodā that Kṛṣṇa joins the other boys to take the cows out to graze for the day - He knows this is the dharma for those of His class - it is actually with immense bhāva that He joins His friends. He has just passed His paugaṇḍa age and is entering His kiśora age. Kṛṣṇa is speaking with Subala or some other cowherd boy, and the sakhīs are conversing amongst themselves. ...Sai is a very simple and sweet word for ...sakhī . They say, “Sai, why have we been made to hear the name of Śyāma? Entering through our ears, it has touched the core of our hearts and confounded our very lives.”

At once the gopīs became perplexed in the eagerness to attain Kṛṣṇa, and this is the very purpose of hearing the scriptures. By hearing the glories of our worshipable Deity through the medium of our ears, our heart should become so attached to Him that day and night we will do nothing besides meditate on His sweetness. The gopīs have not just come to the end of sādhana by attaining svarūpa-siddhi, but they are actually manifestations of the hlādinī-śakti. This meditation is not possible for ordinary people. But as men who work in an oil factory will certainly develop a coating of oil on their hands, similarly, when a sādhaka hears and speaks about these topics, “his hands will become coated”, meaning that a little bhāva will arise in him by which his life will become successful.

Our spiritual sentiments should be so deep that we won’t be able to forget them even for a moment, but regrettably, we have become accustomed to generally doing exactly the opposite. We hear these topics, but it seems as if immediately afterwards, remembrance of material enjoyment consumes us. We are taking harināma, studying ślokaś, and giving scriptural readings, but where are our minds? Just as when we place an empty pot in a river it immediately fills up with water, immediately after hearing some of this bhagavat-kathā our minds will again become filled with thoughts of the sense enjoyment which we have been experiencing since time immemorial.

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We must try to keep the mind free from these thoughts, even though it may not always remain steady. We should go to wherever hari-kathā is being spoken and completely fill our minds with it, leaving no room for thoughts of sense enjoyment.

Indeed, there is nothing more favourable for us than hearing hari-kathā, and it should be as our food. We should have love for hari-kathā, and if not, then we should at least consider it our duty to hear it, understanding that it will bestow upon us our ultimate good fortune. Those whose hearts have been thoroughly purified, who never think of sense enjoyment - when they hear such kathā, deep sentiments which touch the very core of their hearts arise, and they remain absorbed in those sentiments day and night.

In another place Caṇḍīdāsa writes that the young kiśorī daughter of Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu sits alone, completely perplexed, not speaking to anyone, and one of Her elders says to her, “My child, what are You doing? Why are You sitting there like that? Come over here and do this task.” But She doesn’t listen; She is unable to comprehend what has happened inside Her. Her eyes are open, which is a symptom of consciousness, but She isn’t looking at anything. She saw Śyāma one time, but He left, and now She just remains silent and motionless. She has no desire to eat, and She is wearing red cloth - why? To help Her forget His bodily complexion so that She won’t become more dazed and Her condition won’t then be detected by Her elders. With a hairband She has tied white flowers onto Her hair so that its dark shade will not remind Her of Śyāma, but since He has already captured the core of Her heart, how can She possibly prevent remembrance of Him from coming?

Then She began gazing at a cloud which possessed the same complexion as Śyāma. Sometimes She enters the house and sometimes She comes back out; She takes long breaths and Her mind is not steady on anything. Then an elder says to Her, “Why did You go there? What was the necessity? Beware! don’t ever look in the direction of that boy again! Don’t focus Your mind on Him for even one moment, or You won’t be able to perform Your household

duties! You are not listening to me, so have You now lost the fear of Your elders as well? Has some ghost or demigod possessed You?” Not aware of anything, She falls down, and when they lift Her up and place Her somewhere else, She falls down again. Because She has lost Her fear of Her elders, they even abandon the idea of finding a husband for Her. But Caṇḍīdāsa says, “Yes, I understand: She is not mad, not possessed, nothing of the sort, but She has simply fallen into the trap of that black snake Śyāma.” This is pūrva-rāga.

But how can a sādhaka experience this? Generally our minds are full of unlimited varieties of material desires, but when none of these desires remain, meaning when one obtains the company of an exalted guru and receives the unconditional mercy of Bhagavān, then some shadow of bhāva will come. By chanting the extraordinarily beautiful śyāma-nāma and the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, Rūpa Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, and Nārada all went mad with ecstasy, so tell me then - how much bhāva must be contained within it? And Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also has written so many lines which are saturated with bhāva, like:

*vibhāvarī śeṣa, āloka-praveśa, nidrā chāri uṭho jīva*

This refers to meditating on the pastimes which Kṛṣṇa performs at the end of the night while ordinary jīvas remain sleeping. And in the same song, phula-śara-jojaka kāmā: “Śrī Kṛṣṇa utilises flowered arrows to increase the gopīs desire.” Until one has understood well the conception delineated in the Ujjvala-nīlamanī, he won’t understand this line. Or if the kāmā-gāyatrī reveals itself to someone, then that person will understand something of its meaning, but without the mercy of the kāmā-gāyatrī it cannot be understood. The bhāva of a mahā-bhāgavata Vaiṣṇava comes within this line, but even though we sing this line every morning, what do we accrue from it? Therefore the difference between a sādhaka’s chanting of the holy name and a perfected soul’s chanting of the holy name is like the difference between the land and the sky. When one has fully realised the sweetness of



harināma, then his tongue will not be able to stop chanting it. For example, when Caitanya Mahāprabhu would go to pass water, He would firmly grasp His tongue with one hand. Seeing this, His young servant Gopāla asked, “Prabhu, why are You doing this?”

Mahāprabhu replied, “My tongue doesn’t obey Me. One shouldn’t take the name of Govinda in a contaminated place, but it won’t obey Me.”

Gopāla replied, “But Prabhu, at the time of dying one may pass stool and urine, and if we don’t chant the Name at that time, our lives will be spoiled!”

Being pleased, Mahāprabhu said, “As of today you have become guru. Yes, the Name should be taken at that time also.” So He released His tongue and chanted at all times, even when going to the bathroom. During the night, Mahāprabhu’s servant Govinda dāsa thought that He was merely sleeping, but He would remain awake taking kṛṣṇa-nāma, crying, and sometimes rubbing His face on the wall. And when Rāya Rāmānanda and Svarūpa Dāmodara would come, Govinda dāsa would become very unhappy and think, “Why have they come? They will make Him cry and He will not be able to sleep tonight.”

When this high type of intense bhāva comes while taking harināma, then one’s composure will be destroyed and he will think, “Without seeing Kṛṣṇa I cannot live any longer! How can I meet Him? What will I do?” Then one’s fear of elders, fear of being disgraced in society, and self-restraint are all lost. There are certain inhibitions which restrain love, but when they are all broken down, one’s self-restraint is lost. Even Rukmiṇī and Satyabhāmā are not capable of this, so what to speak of others? The night before her proposed marriage, through a brāhmaṇa Rukmiṇī sent a message to Kṛṣṇa saying, “Tomorrow I will be married. If You don’t come and save me from this, I will give up my life. Shamefully I am writing this to You; a cultured girl should not write like this, but shamefully I am writing to You because otherwise a jackal will snatch away the lion’s share.” So even though Rukmiṇī is expressing these deep sentiments, she feels some shame; but the gopīs feel no such shame, and therefore their bhāva is so much deeper.

When the gopīs would see Kṛṣṇa returning from taking the cows out to graze, they would gaze upon Him with greedy eyes and their ānanda would increase. But when they couldn't see Him, even a moment seemed like millions of yugas which would never pass. This is pūrva-rāga, and countless beautiful sentiments are included within it.

The gopīs felt that the time which elapsed during the blinking of their eyes was like an infinity, and they have themselves described this in the Bhāgavatam (10.31.15):

*aṭati yad bhavān ahni kānanam*  
 truṭi yugāyate tvām apaśyatām  
 kuṭila-kuntalam śrī-mukham ca te  
 jaḍa udīkṣatām pakṣma-kṛd dṛśam

When Kṛṣṇa would spend the day wandering in the forest with the sakhās, the gopīs, unable to see His beautiful face adorned with lovely locks of hair, would be anguished in separation from Him. And what to speak of that, even when Kṛṣṇa was before them, they considered the tiny fraction of time which elapsed in the blinking of their eyes to be like millenniums, and they cursed the creator Brahmā as being foolish for having created eyes which must blink. Our time is mostly spent joking around, but in comparison what kind of bhajana was performed by these great personalities?

We have read that only once in his entire life did Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī laugh. While he was reading Rūpa Gosvāmī's Vidagdha-mādhavanāṭaka, his tears were falling on the hand-written pages and smearing the ink. Seeing this, Rūpa Gosvāmī asked for it back, but Raghunātha dāsa clutched it to his heart and refused to return it. Therefore Rūpa Gosvāmī composed the Dāna-keli-kaumudī very quickly, and after reading only a few verses of it, Raghunātha dāsa began laughing. Otherwise he remained crying for Kṛṣṇa throughout his entire life. If there is such crying for Kṛṣṇa, then that is real sādhana and one will certainly receive His darśana, just as in the case of Bilvamaṅgala. Presently we may be engaged in only the semblance of real

sādhana, abhāsa, but if even in this stage of sādhana-abhāsa we feel so much joy by hearing and speaking this kathā, then just imagine how much ānanda we will feel when we enter into real sādhana!

## Chapter Fifteen Kṛṣṇa's Beauty is Unsurpassed

*tan-manaskās tad-ālāpās tad-viśeṣās tad-ātmikāḥ tad-guṇān eva gāyantyo  
nātmāgārāṇi sasmaruḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.30.43 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.134

“Those vraja-gopīs who had fully given their hearts to Śrī Kṛṣṇa would imitate His manner of speaking and His activities. Since they had offered their very souls to Him and always sang His glories, they completely forgot themselves and their family interests.”

In the gradual development of bhakti, from niṣṭhā comes ruci, where it becomes tasteful. From ruci comes āsakti, where one will have no desire to leave it. Then comes bhāva, and then prema, sneha, māna, praṇaya, rāga, anurāga, and in some cases even mahābhāva, where one receives the pinnacle of experience of Kṛṣṇa. Possessing this mahābhāva, the gopīs minds and hearts became so absorbed in Kṛṣṇa that they could no longer be considered their own. If you place a piece of cotton on a few drops of water, the water is immediately absorbed into it. Similarly, the water of the gopīs hearts was immediately absorbed into the Kṛṣṇa-cotton in such a way that it was as if their individual existences were lost. If someone is fortunate enough to receive Kṛṣṇa's direct darśana or to hear about Him from a rasika Vaiṣṇava, then they may also experience this same absorption. Singing about His virtues more and more, they at once became tad-ātmikāḥ - they completely forgot their own bodies, their bodily relations, their homes, everything.

If we have a task to perform but due to some obstacle we cannot complete it, we simply return home. But the gopīs were searching for Kṛṣṇa

everywhere, asking the vines, trees, tulasī, and the deer if they had seen Him; still they could not find Him anywhere. But did they return to their homes? Even though they could not find Him, their homes and families had been completely forgotten. They became so absorbed in thinking of Him that it was as if they were possessed by ghosts. Taking on Kṛṣṇa's identity, they began imitating His activities and saying to one another, "How beautiful is my gait? How beautifully do I play the flute?" At that time they didn't know what they were doing, and this is what is meant by ...tan-manaskās . They became so absorbed in Kṛṣṇa that their natures changed like iron put into a fire and they forgot everything.

As the gopīs searched for Kṛṣṇa, all they remembered were His virtues and His pastimes with them. Whereas we think mostly of our material comforts and are capable of forgetting bhakti, they are just the opposite. We should endeavour to become like the eternal associates of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, such as Mādhavendra Purī, who would go days without eating or even begging and was always absorbed in remembrance of Kṛṣṇa. As our bhakti increases, we will forget more and more the demands of our bodies and our bodily relations, and this remembrance will also increase. Kṛṣṇa had left the gopīs, but they never thought, "Kṛṣṇa is so cruel because He has left us!" Otherwise they would have given up searching for Him and returned home, but they didn't do that. They continued searching for Him, and they began singing in glorification of His virtues, especially His kindness:

*praṇata-dehinām pāpa-karṣaṇam tṛṇa-carānugam śrī-niketanam phaṇi-  
phaṇārpitam te padāmbujam kṛṇu kuceṣu naḥ kṛndhi hṛc-chayam*

Śrīmad-Bhāg.  
10.31.7

"O Prabhu, You are very merciful. Why are You afraid that there may be a sinful reaction if You were to place Your lotus feet on our breasts? By merely remembering Your name, all sins are destroyed."

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...Prašata means that if one surrenders everything to Bhagavān including one's false ego, then all sins are destroyed, and when all of one's sins are destroyed, then at once one receives Bhagavān's direct darśana. Gajendra the elephant fought with a crocodile for thousands of years until, being partially submerged in water, he took a lotus in his trunk and held it up as an offering to Bhagavān while silently praying, "Prabhu, now I am surrendered to You, and I am not even concerned if You save me or if I perish." By the power of this surrender, all of his anarthas and aparādhās from so many lives were destroyed and at once Bhagavān came. He killed the crocodile with His cakra, and Gajendra was released.

If someone factually surrenders to Bhagavān, then that surrender will be the destroyer of all of his faults. Are we surrendered like this? Have all of our faults and offenses been eradicated? This is the measuring stick. Most of the suffering that we are feeling and the obstacles that are arising in our bhajana are reactions to our misdeeds in previous lives. No matter where one goes, these reactions to previous karma and offences cannot be escaped, so an intelligent man will remain in the company of sādhus who will gradually lead him to Bhagavān.

The gopīs pray, praṇata-dehinām pāpa-karṣaṇam: "O Govinda, You are so merciful that You destroy the sins of those who surrender to You. We are surrendered to You, so is it that because of the sins of our previous lives You remain hidden from us and do not give us Your darśana? We are crying in separation from You, and today, in this world there is no one as unhappy as us. We have abandoned forever our homes and families, and now we are left with no other shelter besides You! So won't You destroy all of our sins?" These are the inner sentiments of one gopī. There are so many different kinds of gopīs with different sentiments, and another gopī is saying, "You destroy the sins of one who is surrendered. Until tonight we have not been able to surrender, but having abandoned our homes, husbands, children, and the fear of being disgraced in society, we have come to You. So what remains for us to surrender? Now please give us Your darśana, and by

placing Your lotus feet on our heads, give us the boon of mitigating our fear of the snake of separation from You. Those feet are eternally served by Śrī Lakṣmī, so are we to be deprived of the favour of serving them because we have taken birth in cowherding families in Gokula? Those feet follow after the cows in the pastures, and You are so merciful that even without any umbrella over Your head or any shoes on Your feet You take those cows, who are merely ignorant animals, out to graze, so who could be as kind as You?” In this way, even though they were anguished, they continued to sing the glories of Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet.

In the Bhramara-gīta, we find the gopīs deriding Kṛṣṇa and accusing Him of being cruel and deceptive, but still their minds never left Him.

*mṛgayur iva kapīndraṁ vivyadhe lubdha-dharmā*

Śrīmad-Bhāg.  
10.47.17

“In Kṛṣṇa’s previous life, instead of killing the innocent Vāli in the manner of a kṣatriya, He killed him from a hidden position like a hunter. And when a woman approached Him with amorous desires, being a kṣatriya He should have satisfied her; but instead, although He was excited by her beauty, He wanted to preserve His vow to Sītā, so He made her ugly by chopping off her nose and ears. He is so eager to show that He cannot be conquered by a woman, but in that instance we can clearly see that He really had been overpowered by a woman.” Even though they were accusing Kṛṣṇa, could they ever stop thinking of Him and speak about anything else?

In the verse we are discussing here, ...tad-ālāpā means that the gopīs sang in melodious tones the glories of Kṛṣṇa’s nāma, guṇa, rūpa, and līlā. This is symptomatic of bhakti. In the stage of sādhana, whenever the mind strays, it must be brought back to Bhagavān’s nāma, guṇa, rūpa, and līlā, and then it is real sādhana. There is no greater sādhana than this. Even endeavouring to push the thoughts of worldly enjoyment out of the mind is not necessary. The mind which has a tendency to ponder sense enjoyment should simply be

engaged in hearing and describing Bhagavān's nāma, guṇa, rūpa, and līlā, and that will be all that is necessary. Doing that more and more, then eventually these topics will become fully tasteful to us.

...Tad-viceṣṭā means the gopīs sang of Kṛṣṇa's activities which were in relation to them: how He met with them, how He fed them tām̐būla, how He tied bells on their ankles, how He strung garlands of flowers for them, and how when they became fatigued He wiped the dust from their faces and bodies and composed a bed of flowers for them to rest on. Then they became tad-ātmikā - both internally and externally they began glorifying Him, and they forgot their homes and even their very own selves. What to speak of returning to their homes, remembrance of the home itself didn't even arise in their minds. Glorifying Kṛṣṇa more and more in their separation, they completely forgot all worldly concerns.

Nirguṇa-yogīs don't meditate on anything; their minds become attached to the void. They don't meditate on the ātmā, on Paramātmā, or on any material object either. They are nirāśraya, without shelter, and are therefore prone to falling down; but devotees, who follow in the footsteps of the gopīs and constantly meditate on Kṛṣṇa's attributes are āśraya, sheltered, and there is no possibility of them falling down.

Next comes this verse:

*gopyas tapaḥ kim acarān yad amuṣya rūpaṁ lāvaṇya-sāram asamordhvam  
ananya-siddham dṛgbhiḥ pibanty anusavābhinavam durāpam ekānta-dhāma  
yaśasaḥ śriya aiśvarasya*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.44.14 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.135

The ladies of Mathurā said, "Which austerities did the vraja-gopīs perform by which they could always drink through their eyes the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's form - which is the very essence of loveliness, which is unequalled or unsurpassed, which is perfect in itself and always appears new and fresh,

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which is extremely rare to behold and is always the exclusive shelter of all fame, splendour, and opulence?”

When Kṛṣṇacandrajī entered the wrestling arena with Balarāma, the ladies of Mathurā spoke this verse in glorification of the gopīs. They said, “In this assembly, adharma is taking place, so we should not remain here.” One should not remain in a place where sinful activities are being committed. When the attempt was made to disrobe Draupadī, that was also an assembly of adharma, and men of good values should not have stayed there. So why then did Grandfather Bhīṣma remain there? At that time sinful reaction did not come to him because he knew well the greatness of Bhagavān and His devotees, and he remained silent so that their greatness would be shown. He could have taken a stand against the evil men who were offending Draupadī, and he was certainly capable of killing them all single-handedly; but even though Draupadī implored him to help her, he remained silent. He was a jñānī-bhakta, and he knew that if someone was surrendered to Bhagavān, then He would protect them accordingly. That was his thinking, but what were those evil men thinking? “What will Bhagavān do? He has no power to stop us, so we will do as we please” and they tried to disrobe her. And what about the Pāṇḍavas? Four of them were infuriated, but Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja remained silent. Being a jñānī-bhakta also, he knew that Kṛṣṇa would protect Draupadī appropriately, but Bhīma and Arjuna, who had less awareness of Kṛṣṇa’s divinity and saw Him more as a common friend in sakhya-bhāva, were furious.

At the wrestling arena, the ladies of Mathurā saw how those fearful wrestlers, whose massive bodies were like mountains and as if made of iron, wanted to kill soft and tender Kṛṣṇa. They saw how Baladeva’s face was red with anger, and how Kṛṣṇa was smiling even though He was also angry. Considering that an injustice was about to take place, they felt that it would be shameful if they remained there. There was no one present who could prevent it: Ugrasena had been imprisoned, and other elders like Akrūra remained hidden.



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The meaning of this verse is, “What austerities did the gopīs perform by which they could see such a beautiful and sweet form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as He freely wandered in the forests and kuṣjas of Vraja with a happy heart?” There the gopīs received the darśana of lovely, rasika Kṛṣṇa playing the flute and wearing a peacock feather in His crown. But in the wrestling arena, the ladies of Mathurā did not see that beautiful form of Kṛṣṇa; instead they saw Him in a fighting mood, after He had broken the tusks of an elephant and was decorated with drops of blood.

What is the nature of Kṛṣṇa’s form? “Lāvaṇya-sāram asamordhvam”: it is the very essence of loveliness, and its beauty is unequalled and unsurpassed. Rāma is beautiful, Nārāyaṇa is beautiful, and all other incarnations of Bhagavān are beautiful, but Their beauty does not surpass or even equal Kṛṣṇa’s beauty. Ananya-siddham: if Kṛṣṇa is wearing an ornament, He becomes more beautiful and if He removes that ornament, He becomes even more beautiful. Then if He becomes decorated with dust, He becomes even more beautiful again. In all circumstances He is the most beautiful; there is no necessity of Him wearing any ornament such as an earring or a flower to increase His beauty. We feel a need to increase the attractiveness of our appearance - how do we appear when we are not wearing tilaka or when we are wearing soiled clothing? But because Kṛṣṇa has no necessity of trying to increase His beauty, He is ...ananya-siddham .

“Dṛgbhiḥ pibanty anusavābhinavam”: the ladies of Mathurā are saying, “That beautiful form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa which we have never seen, the gopīs have seen in Vraja.” Suppose we have a desire to see someone whose appearance is very beautiful. Upon seeing their face just once, we become satisfied and there is no need to look again. But upon seeing Kṛṣṇa, one will have no desire to remove their gaze from Him because He always appears new and fresh. One will perpetually remain thirsty to drink the nectar of His appearance and will never desire to look away. His form is the ...ekānta-dhāma - the exclusive shelter of fame, beauty, and opulence as well as the three other qualities of Bhagavān which are not mentioned in this verse. So

the ladies of Mathurā are saying, “Aho! What austerities did the gopīs perform to receive darśana of that form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa? We are seeing Kṛṣṇa as He is angrily attacking His enemies, but they saw Him as the attractor of even Cupid himself.”

They want to know what austerities were performed by the gopīs to attain darśana of that form, but only by aspiring to serve Kṛṣṇa in the mood of the gopīs can this be attained. Without an intense hankering for that, it is very, very difficult. No performance of ordinary austerities can bestow the darśana of that form of Kṛṣṇa which was seen by the gopīs. There are so many of us who chant one lākha of harināma daily, and we haven’t received that darśana yet, so what to speak of others? There are many well-known austerities, but none of them can bestow this fruit. Some persons sit in the middle of fires in the hot season, and others bathe at four in the morning in the Yamunā in the cold season and then return home in wet cloth regardless of whether it is windy, raining, snowing, whatever. But are there any austerities which, by practicing, we can attain Bhagavān?

*ārādhito yadi haristapasā  
tataḥ kiṁ nārādhito yadi  
haristapasā tataḥ kiṁ  
antarbahiryadi haristapasā  
tataḥ kiṁ nāntarbahiryadi  
haristapasā tataḥ kiṁ*

Nārada-  
paṣcarātra

What is the value of austerities performed by sages like Durvāsā if they haven’t worshipped Bhagavān, and if they don’t see Bhagavān everywhere? And if one does see Bhagavān within every living entity and everywhere outside as well, then what is the use of any other austerities besides that form of worship? For them there is no necessity of performing any austerities

other than observing devotional vows like those for Ekādaśī, Janmāṣṭamī, etc. Besides taking harināma and hearing and meditating on hari-kathā, there is no method to attain Kṛṣṇa's darśana. The objective of tapasyā is to concentrate one's mind, but catching hold of the wind is easy in comparison to subjugating the wicked mind, so how will it be accomplished? It can only be achieved by serving Vaiṣṇavas, hearing hari-kathā, loudly chanting harināma, and meditating on Bhagavān.

Because the ladies of Mathurā were seeing Kṛṣṇa with prema, He appeared ever-new and fresh. There were others present in that arena such as the wrestlers, but did they see Him in the same way? They were not pleased upon seeing Him and instead merely became angry. Did Hiraṇyakaśipu enjoy hearing Bhagavān's name, which is sweeter than sweetness itself? So the ladies of Mathurā are saying that the gopīs drank the ever-fresh, enchanting form of Kṛṣṇa with their eyes just as one drinks nectar with the mouth. His form is the essence of lāvaṇya, loveliness. It is as if He is the very embodiment of all loveliness.

A lion which is kept in a cage does not appear very beautiful, but when it is set free in the forest, then the entirety of its beauty and power and everything are apparent. Similarly, all of Kṛṣṇa's beauty and sweetness are exhibited only ...in the forest of Vraja. He was not as beautiful in the wrestling arena with drops of the elephant's blood spattered on His face. In this connection Sanātana Gosvāmī quotes this verse from the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (3.2.12):

*yan-martya-līlaupayikaṁ sva-yogamāyā-balaṁ darśayatā grhītam  
vismāpanaṁ svasya ca saubhagarddheḥ paraṁ padaṁ bhūṣaṇa-  
bhūṣaṇāṅgam*

“By His Yogamāyā potency, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa appeared in this world to lead the conditioned souls back to Him, and He exhibited a form which being seen would enchant them all. That form is the best of all, the ornament of all ornaments, and seeing it is the pinnacle of good fortune.”

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## Chapter Sixteen

### The Nature of The Gopīs Mahābhāva

No one can taste Kṛṣṇa's beauty as the gopīs do. What is the reason? Only in Vraja, where Kṛṣṇa's rūpa-mādhurī, līlā-mādhurī, veṇu-mādhurī, and prema-mādhurī are all present, is He overpowered by the prema of His associates. Of the many devotees there, none overpower Him as the gopīs do, and amongst them, Śrīmatī Rādhikā overpowers Him the most. Concerning this point, Sanātana Gosvāmī has written a special philosophical conclusion in his commentary to this verse. As he said before, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the source of all incarnations, performs unlimited pastimes in unlimited dhāmas, but the pinnacle of His mādhurī flows in Vraja and nowhere else. Because the anurāga of the residents there is forever increasing, the entirety of His sweetness is exhibited there. Kṛṣṇa is mādhurya, sweet, but if the gopīs were not there, His sweetness would not reach its highest point. No other devotees can experience yāvadāśraya-vṛtti, which is a special characteristic of the gopīs mahābhāva.

To the degree that there is love for something, it can be tasted, and if there is no love, it cannot really be tasted. The meaning of yāvadāśraya-vṛtti is that the gopīs prema reaches as far as and even further than anyone can possibly describe it. If you stretch a rubber band it will snap at a certain point, but their prema, and only theirs, increases unlimitedly. Therefore they alone fully relish the rasa of Kṛṣṇa's four types of mādhurī.

The tendency to relish the unsurpassed beauty of Kṛṣṇa's form is yāvadāśraya-vṛtti, another name for which is mahābhāva. Kṛṣṇa is Rasarāja, and the gopīs are mahābhāva, and when they meet, the gopīs relish He who is the very embodiment of rasa. But the dynamic nature of this meeting is that sometimes Kṛṣṇa becomes yāvadāśraya-vṛtti, and the gopīs become rasarāja. This is not possible for anyone else but the gopīs; being overpowered by their prema, Kṛṣṇa begins serving and attending them.

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Suppose there is a young boy who is lame, ugly, and unable to speak properly. It is doubtful that others will be very affectionate towards him, but his mother will always love him. Why? Because she possesses ...anurāga , spontaneous love for him, and although that is simply a reflection of the genuine sentiment, anurāga is the root cause of love. Because the gopīs anurāga for Kṛṣṇa expands unlimitedly, it is called yāvadāśraya-vṛtti. Upon receiving Kṛṣṇa's darśana, the gopīs prema multiplies millions of times - this is the vṛtti, tendency, of their anurāga. But this only occurs when they see the unsurpassed mādhyura of Kṛṣṇa's form; it does not happen when they see anyone else, including Uddhava, who looks so much like Kṛṣṇa.

The ladies of Mathurā lamented that although they were seeing Kṛṣṇa directly, they did not possess the quality of prema for Him by which they could see His form of unsurpassed beauty as the gopīs always did. A person eats something with great pleasure when they are hungry. And if someone isn't hungry, they may pinch a bit of the preparation off with their nails, examine it, find fault with it, and not desire to eat it. But if one is hungry, he will consider any preparation to be tasteful, even if it is stale. Then what to speak of that preparation which is unlimitedly sweet? In this way, the gopīs ...hunger for Kṛṣṇa is such that as they taste Kṛṣṇa's mādhyura, their mahābhāva increases so much that it knows no upper limit. Even though there is no space for it to increase any further, still it increases. In the upper stages of mahābhāva known as mādana and modana, it perpetually increases and feels ever-new and fresh.

In our present condition we cannot estimate even a fraction of that, but when our faith in guru, Vaiṣṇava, and Bhagavān is sufficiently developed, then as we become free from the influence of our anarthas, niṣṭhā will come. Even if we possess some śraddhā and niṣṭhā in partial form, still, our ruci must become deep. For now our minds may not remain steady, but someday bhāva will come to us, and precisely when it will come is not in our hands. It is solely in the hands of Bhagavān and those devotees who possess that bhāva, and only when they bestow their mercy will it come to us. At that

time even the experience of mahābhāva will come to a deserving soul automatically, even though he may have not previously known anything of that tendency. It may seem that there is no hope of it ever coming and no space whatsoever for it in our hearts, but still it will come automatically. Then by its wonderful influence one will easily cross over whatever seemingly insurmountable obstacles which may exist in this world.

The ladies of Mathurā speak of mādhyura Kṛṣṇa who had come to Mathurā from Vraja. Why didn't He bring His flute with Him to Mathurā? Because if He were to play the flute in Mathurā, no lady would leave her home and family in the dead of night to come to Him; there was no qualified recipient for the flute-song in Mathurā. The ladies there saw His beautiful form, but would they ever leave their husbands to go to Him? Would it happen in Dvārakā? All would be afraid of transgressing their dharma and being disgraced in society. Because mahā-bhāva and yāvadāśraya-vṛtti do not exist there, no one would come.

In this regard Sanātana Gosvāmī says in his commentary that a devotee will perform kīrtana and hear hari-kathā of his worshipable Deity, but direct experience of Him will only come in the dhāma. A devotee may meditate on Kṛṣṇa, become absorbed in remembrance of Him, and gain some attachment for the bhāva of Vraja, but direct experience of Kṛṣṇa can come only in Vṛndāvana, whether it is Gokula or Goloka. In other places meditation and remembrance are possible, but direct experience of Him is available only in Vṛndāvana. Therefore Kṛṣṇa's eternal associates in Dvārakā and Mathurā may also be able to estimate the mādhyura of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja to a certain degree, but could they ever achieve direct experience of it? Would they ever be able to abandon everything and come to Kṛṣṇa in the dead of night? No, and nor would Kṛṣṇa ever enter the royal assembly hall in Dvārakā in His Vraja attire.

Mahābhāva is unlimitedly variegated. Ordinarily it is said that mahābhāva is of two varieties - ruḍha and adhiruḍha, but thousands of variations of each of them are possible, some in meeting and some in separation. But all

varieties of mahābhāva are embodied in Śrīmatī Rādhikā, or they are manifest in Her expansions as the sakhīs. She is the svayam-rūpa of mahābhāva, as Kṛṣṇa is the svayam-rūpa and source of the tad-ekātma, svāmśaka, vilāsa, āveśa, prābhava-prakāśa, vaibhava-prakāśa, and guṇa expansions. The guṇa-avatāras are Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śaṅkara, and the āveśa-avatāras include Pṛthu, Nārada, Vyāsa, Kapila, and Paraśurāma. They all possess specific natures or empowerments. Then when Kṛṣṇa expands into forms which are fully saccidānanda and sarva-śaktimān, it is called tad-ekātma-rūpa.

As all these personalities expand from Him and perpetually exist within Him, Rādhā embodies all of the three hundred and sixty varieties of heroines. Due to this She always attracts Kṛṣṇa's mind. If Kṛṣṇa desires a specific bhāva, and in one gopī it is found to be insufficient, He can attain it by associating with another gopī. But none of them can completely mystify and enchant Him as only Rādhikā can.

Because unlimited feelings and desires arise within Kṛṣṇa, as the best lover and the hero of all women He is sometimes dhīrodāṭṭa (grave and gentle), sometimes dhīra-śanta (peaceful and forbearing), sometimes dhīra-lalita (carefree and jovial), and sometimes dhīroddhata (proud and restless). He is all of these at the same time, and when there is the necessity for only one of these moods, He manifests that specific one. In the same way, Śrīmatī Rādhikā manifests whatever mood is necessary, sometimes becoming dhīra (grave), sometimes mānanī (pouting), and sometimes dakṣiṇa (clever). As the crown-jewel and very embodiment of the three hundred and sixty varieties of heroines, She relishes the sweetness of Kṛṣṇa to the utmost. Because She can manifest all the qualities of all the varieties of heroines, She is known as ...mādanākhyā-bhavati .

While meeting with Kṛṣṇa She experiences mādana, and in separation from Him She experiences mohana. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu showed something of these elevated states of Hers to the world, and besides Him there has never been anyone in this world who could exhibit these things. However,

when He was exhibiting these states, Rāya Rāmānanda and Svarūpa Dāmodara, due to being His intimate associates, could also relish something of them. Besides them no one else could comprehend these sentiments, but later Mahāprabhu invested the śakti to understand them directly into the heart of Rūpa Gosvāmī, saying, “He will manifest My bhāva in this world through his writings.”

As Rādhikā experiences unlimited pastimes, the twenty varieties of ecstatic symptoms beginning with kila-kiṣcita arise in Her simultaneously. She Herself cannot comprehend all these sentiments, and the appropriate sentiment is always manifest in Her at the correct time for Kṛṣṇa’s pleasure. Because of this, She is eternally the beloved of Kṛṣṇa in His svayam-rūpa. He never appears to Her as any kāya-vyūha expansion, or simply by sphūrti (arising in Her meditation), but is always with Her in His original form - in both meeting and separation.

Once, Rādhikā was seated somewhere in Vraja meditating on Kṛṣṇa more and more until She suddenly became completely overwhelmed. Then from behind someone placed their hands over Her eyes. She called out, “Lalitā?” But the hands were not removed; only when She called out the name of the person covering Her eyes would the hands be removed. “Viśākhā? Citrā? Kundalatā?” She called out the names of all Her sakhīs, but still the hands were not removed. When She said, ...Śyāmasundara! then He removed His hands and joyfully sat beside Her. Sanātana Gosvāmī comments on this līlā that Rādhikā thought that Kṛṣṇa appeared by sphūrti - in Her meditation, or that because at that time He was present in Mathurā or Dvārakā in His original form, He must have come there by assuming a kāya-vyūha expansion. But he concludes that Kṛṣṇa must have appeared there in His svayam-rūpa, because otherwise Rādhikā would not be fully satisfied. This is the wonderful conception of Sanātana Gosvāmī.

If Mahāprabhu is in Purī, but in Navadvīpa Mother Śacī is crying while making an offering to Him, would she be satisfied if He were to appear there in a mere kāya-vyūha expansion? Knowing that she would only be satisfied if



He came in His original form, He does just that, and it is the same with Śrīmatī Rādhikā. In His original form Kṛṣṇa always remains by the side of Rādhikā, and is never able to be separated from Her. Sanātana Gosvāmī says that because the vraja-devīs possess the paramount mahābhāva - yāvadāśraya-vṛtti - how could Kṛṣṇa ever leave them? Even while residing in a foreign land He visits them in Vṛndāvana in His original form - and only them, not others such as the sakhās.

*rākhite tomāra jīvana, sevi āmi nārāyaṇa, tāṇra śaktye āsi niti-nititomā-sane  
krīḍā kari , niti yāi yadu-purī, tāhā tumi mānaha mora sphūrti  
mora bhāgya mo-vasaye, tomāra ye prema haye, sei prema-parama  
prabalalukāṣā āmā ane, saṅga karāya tomā-sane, prakāṣe ānibe satvara*

Cait.-carit.  
13.154,155

Madhya-līlā

Sitting alone with Rādhā in Vraja, Kṛṣṇa says, “My dearest Śrīmatī Rādhikā, in the distant land of Dvārakā I have married many ladies, but in reality I don’t love any of them as I love You. I searched the entire universe for one kiśorī whose beauty, complexion, and nature was like Yours. I found Satyabhāmā, but I remain with her only because she reminds Me of You; and similarly I have married sixteen thousand queens because each of them reminds Me of the gopīs. If somehow that remembrance of You were to be lost, I would leave them all at once. You say that when We are apart You feel as if You are dying, but I am constantly meditating on how to save Your life, and for this purpose I worship Nārāyaṇa. By His mercy and mystical potency, I am able to come to Vṛndāvana every day to enjoy Your company. You consider My appearance to be in Your meditation or in a kāya-vyūha form but I come to Vṛndāvana in My original form. My great good fortune is the immense love that You have for Me. Unknown to everyone in Dvārakā and in Vṛndāvana, I come here to You, and hopefully very soon I will also be visible to everyone else here.”

In the verse we are discussing are the words “amuṣya-rūpaṁ”, meaning “that very form”. The ladies of Mathurā are saying, “We are seeing Kṛṣṇa, but why are we not feeling the highest prema? What austerities did the gopīs perform to be able to see with the eyes of mahābhāva the original form of Kṛṣṇa - adorned with a peacock feather in His crown and the very essence of all loveliness?” Unable to see that form of Kṛṣṇa which the gopīs see and unable to experience the mahābhāva of the gopīs, they wanted to know which austerities they could perform to become similarly fortunate.

Not everyone will be able to feel such elevated bhāva. When our gurudeva Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Prajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja would dance, he would move in an exceptionally sweet and lovely way. With his eyes turned upwards and holding his sannyāsa-daṇḍa in his hand, he would dance immersed in bhāva. I have never seen such dancing as his in all my life. Whenever he would hear Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes he would become emotional and begin weeping, and if we perform bhajana sincerely with resolute determination, we may also one day experience some of this bhāva. We desire these feelings as do the ladies of Mathurā who lamented, “Hāya! Hāya! We are seeing Kṛṣṇa directly, yet we cannot experience the bhāva of the gopīs. Our lives are useless!”

Sanātana Gosvāmī says that only in Vraja can the sweet form of Kṛṣṇa as the essence of loveliness and the emporium of rasa be seen and only in Vraja can such a sweet bhāva be experienced. Outside Vraja Kṛṣṇa’s original form cannot be seen directly, and this bhāva cannot be directly relished. In other places one may possibly see Kṛṣṇa by meditation or in one of His expansions, but direct experience of Him is not possible. Next comes this verse:

*yā dohane vahanane mathanopalepa-preṅkheṅkhanārbha-ruditokṣaṇa-  
mārjanādaḥ gāyanti cainam anurakta-dhiyo śru-kaṇṭhyo dhanyā vraja-striya  
urukrama-citta-yānāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.44.15 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.136

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“The gopīs are extremely fortunate, because their hearts are always so absorbed in Śrī Kṛṣṇa that while milking cows, churning yoghurt, applying candana and other decorations to their bodies, comforting crying babies, washing their floors, and performing all other household duties, tears of love flow from their eyes as they continuously sing about His purifying fame.”

Generally, when a kaniṣṭha-adhikārī goes to visit a mahā-bhāgavata Vaiṣṇava, he first thinks “He is a kaniṣṭha-adhikārī just like me.” At first, Sarvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya ridiculed Rāya Rāmānanda, thinking that he spoke too highly about women - Sarvabhauma considered the gopīs to be ordinary women. He only respected the jñāna of the four Kumāras, the vairāgya of Śukadeva Gosvāmī, and the nirviśeṣa conception of Śaṅkarācārya. Therefore if one isn’t of a higher type himself, he won’t be able to understand the bhāva of higher devotees. And only a great, perfected personality who is rāgātmikā, or a devotee who is in the final stage of rāgānugā-sādhana, will understand the prema of the gopīs. Even devotees such as Bhīṣma who were contemporary with them could not fully understand the exalted nature of their prema. Only those who were near them could understand something of it. For instance, Uddhava had to leave Dvārakā and go to Vraja to understand something about how exalted the gopīs were; if he had remained in Dvārakā, he would have never understood.

This verse and the previous one were spoken by the ladies of Mathurā, and because Mathurā is only five miles from Vraja, sometimes the spiritual greed of the devotees of Vraja would find its way to Mathurā. Besides Uddhava, sometimes tradesmen and others would travel back and forth between Vraja and Mathurā, and in this way the residents of Mathurā would be able to understand something of the bhāva of Vraja; but those who lived far away from Vraja understood nothing of it.

Even in separation from Kṛṣṇa, the gopīs were always meeting Him. While looking after their children, milking the cows, churning yoghurt, applying candana, and doing housework, they always received His direct darśana through singing about Him, and therefore kīrtana is the best devotional

activity. Singing in unison in a soft morning rāga, they saw Kṛṣṇa with the eyes of bhāva, even though not abandoning their duties. Similarly, a sādḥaka will observe all the rules and regulations of vaidhī-bhakti, but internally his bhāva should be of rāgānugā-bhakti. Externally he will appear to be the same, but internally his bhāva will be different. The greed of rāgānugā will take one to Vraja, whereas vaidhī-bhakti will take one only to Vaiṣṇava. Because the ladies of Mathurā are in close proximity to Vraja and therefore the bhāva of Vraja, they are praying that they will also experience the bhāva of the gopīs.

At the time of the rāsa-līlā, Kṛṣṇa and the gopīs were singing together. In beautiful melodies saturated with rasa, the gopīs defeated Kṛṣṇa by singing “Kṛṣṇa sādhu, Kṛṣṇa sādhu” in a note higher than Kṛṣṇa could sing. As the ladies of Mathurā contemplated pastimes such as this which the gopīs enjoyed with Kṛṣṇa, they said, “Whereas we can only see Kṛṣṇa here in a fighting mood, the gopīs perpetually see Him in His form as the crown jewel of vidagdha. We have never received such good fortune!” ...Vidagdha means witty and ingenious, but when applied to Kṛṣṇa it means He who is rasika-catura - supremely clever and skilful in relishing rasa. These ladies of Mathurā were not even as fortunate as the Pulinda girl, who often heard the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute. Even the deer of Vraja heard the melody of His flute, but the ladies of Mathurā could only imagine it.

All of our duties should be performed while singing nāma-saṅkīrtana. Suppose there is a pitcher of water. If we simply add some lemon juice and some sugar, it immediately becomes nectar. Similarly, we must perform so many worldly duties, but if, following in the bhāva of our guru, we meditate on Bhagavān while carrying them out, they will all become nectar. In the conditioned state, we are always considering what is favourable and what is unfavourable to our bhakti. Because we are in the beginning stages, everything appears to be unfavourable to us, and therefore our minds are disturbed. But to the degree which we progress in sādhana-bhajana means to that degree the vision of what is unfavourable will diminish. And when one

reaches the stage of bhāva, he will perceive everything which he previously considered to be unfavourable as favourable.

Actually, nothing in this world is unfavourable to us; it is only due to our present weaknesses and anarthas that we see our environment as unfavourable. Whatever obstacles we are currently facing are due to our own previous misdeeds, and are not the fault of any other person.

In this verse, the rasika ladies of Mathurā say “urukrama-citta-yānāḥ”: the gopīs minds flow spontaneously towards Urukrama Kṛṣṇa. ...Uru means a strong, continuous current, and because their minds spontaneously flow towards Kṛṣṇa with great speed and force, they are fortunate, and thus Kṛṣṇa comes to them directly while they are singing. So if while carrying out our household duties our minds and hearts are absorbed in Kṛṣṇa’s nāma, guṇa, rūpa, and līlā, then very soon we will receive His direct darśana.

Bhakti-rasāyana ślokaś

*dhanyeyam adya dharaṇī tṛṇa-vīrudhas tvatpāda-sprśo druma-latāḥ  
karajābhimṛṣṭāḥ sadyo drayaḥ khaga-mṛgāḥ sadayāvalokair gopyo ntarena  
bhujayor api yat-sprhā śrīḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.8 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.107

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma, “Today this land, along with all its green grass, has become fortunate due to receiving the touch of Your lotus feet. And receiving the touch of the fingers of Your lotus hands, the trees, creepers, and bushes consider that they have attained the greatest treasure. Receiving Your affectionate glances, the rivers, mountains, birds, and animals are all feeling fully gratified. But most fortunate of all are the vraja-gopīs who have been embraced to Your strong chest, a favour which even Lakṣmīdevī herself always desires.”

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*vṛndāvanam sakhi bhuvo vitanoti kīrtiṁ yad devakī-suta-padāmbuja-labdha-  
lakṣmi govinda-veṇum anu matta-mayūra-nṛtyam prekṣyādri-sānv-  
avaratānya-samasta-sattvam*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.10 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.108

The gopīs said, “O sakhi, this Vṛndāvana is expanding the glories of the Earth planet because it is being adorned with the lotus footprints of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Hearing Him play a soft and deep note on the flute, the peacocks have become maddened and have begun dancing. Beholding this spectacle, all of the birds and animals who reside on the mountainside have abandoned their usual restive activities.”

*hantāyam adrir abalā hari-dāsa-varyo yad-rāma-kṛṣṇa-caraṇa-sparaśa-  
pramodaḥ mānam tanoti saha-go-gaṇayos taylor yat pānīya-sūyavasa-  
kandara-kandamūlaiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.18 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.109

“This Govardhana Hill is the best of all those who are known as hari-dāsa because he is feeling great jubilation from the touch of the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. With great respect Govardhana is worshipping Them by providing all Their necessities such as caves, fruits, flowers, and water for Their pleasure, and for the pleasure of Their cowherd friends, cows, and calves.”

*dṛṣṭvātape vraja-paśūn saha rāma-gopaiḥ  
saścārayantam anu veṇum udīrayantam  
prema-pravṛddha uditāḥ kusumāvalībhiḥ  
sakhyur vyadhāt sva-vapuṣāmbuda ātapatram*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.16 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.110

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“Seeing Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma playing Their flutes in the afternoon sun and taking the cows and calves out for grazing, the clouds burst with divine love, and like an umbrella shield their friend Śrī Kṛṣṇa from the sun while showering tiny drops of rain that are like a shower of flowers.” (Kṛṣṇa has been referred to here as a friend of the clouds because their natures are similar. Both are dark blue in complexion, and as Kṛṣṇa eradicates the heat of material existence by bestowing the nectar of His mercy, the clouds give relief from the heat of this world by showering rain. Kṛṣṇa also plays soft and deep melodies on His flute which resemble the clouds thunder.)

*nadyas tadā tad upadhārya mukunda-gītam āvarta-lakṣita-manobhava-  
bhagna-vegaḥ ālīngana-sthagitam ūrmi-bhujair murārer grhṇanti pāda-  
yugalam kamalopahārāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.15 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.111

“O sakhīs, when the rivers of Vṛndāvana headed by the Yamunā hear the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute, their currents completely stop, and their waters begin to swirl as if they are overcome with desire. With their arms in the form of waves they reach out to touch and offer lotus flowers to His lotus feet.”

*vana-latās tarava ātmani viṣṇuṁ vyaśjayantya iva puṣpa-phalādhyāḥ  
praṇata-bhāra-viṭapā madhu-dhārāḥ prema-hṛṣṭa-tanavo vavṛṣuḥ sma*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.35.9 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.112

“Look how the creepers and the branches of the trees of Vṛndāvana are drooping down due to their weight! They must have also taken Śrī Kṛṣṇa within their hearts, because tears of love in the form of streams of honey are dripping from them, and the emergence of their fruits and flowers bear witness to their ecstatic rapture.”

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*ete linas yaśo khila-loka-tīrthaṅgāyanta ādi-puruṣānupathaṁ bhajanteprāyo  
amī-gaṇā bhavadīya-mukhyāgūḍhaṁ vane pi na jahaty anaghātma-daivam*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.6 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.113

Śrī Kṛṣṇa said to Balarāma, “Hey Ādi-puruṣa! Although You are keeping Your opulences hidden and are performing pastimes as a young boy here in Vṛndāvana, still the munis, who are among the best of Your devotees, have recognised You. Not wanting to be separated from You for even one moment, they have assumed the forms of bees and are worshipping You by constantly singing Your glories as the purifier of this world.”

*sarasi sārasa-hamṣa-vihaṅgāś  
cāru-gīta-hṛta-cetasa etya  
harim upāsata te yata-cittā  
hanta-mīlita-dṛśo dhṛta-maunāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.35.11 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.114

The gopīs said, “It is very astonishing that Kṛṣṇa steals away the hearts of the swans, cranes, and other water-birds in such a way that they approach Him, sit down and worship Him with their eyes closed, and fully concentrate their minds on Him.”

*prāyo batāmba vihaṅgā munayo vane smin kṛṣṇekṣitaṁ tad-uditaṁ kala-  
veṇu-gītaṁ āruhya ye druma-bhujān rucira-pravālān śṛṇvanti mīlita-dṛśo  
vigatānya-vācaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.14 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.115

“O friend, the birds of Vṛndāvana are actually sages. They have taken positions on the branches of trees which have new and fresh leaves from where they can easily have darśana of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Sitting there and hearing



the sweet vibration of His flute, they close their eyes and become immersed in divine bliss.”

*dhanyāḥ sma mūḍha-gatayo pi hariṇya etā yā nanda-nandanam upātta-  
vicitra-veśam ākarṇya veṇu-raṇitam saha-kṛṣṇa-sārāḥ pūjām dadhur  
viracitām praṇayāvalokaiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.11 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.116

“These ignorant deer are also fortunate, because accompanied by their husbands they are standing motionlessly and listening to the vibration of Kṛṣṇa’s flute. It is as if they are offering pūjā to the gorgeously attired son of Nanda with their loving glances.”

*gāvaś ca kṛṣṇa-mukha-nirgata-veṇu-gītapīyūṣam uttabhita-karṇa-putaiḥ  
pibantyaḥ śāvāḥ snuta-stana-payāḥ-kavalāḥ sma tasthur govindam ātmani  
dṛśāśru-kalāḥ sprśantyaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.13 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.117

“In order to drink the nectarean vibration of the flute-song emanating from the lotus mouth of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the cows have raised their ears. The grass which they were chewing just remains in their mouths, and milk begins to drip from their udders. The calves at once stop drinking their mothers milk, and as they embrace Kṛṣṇa within their hearts, tears of love begin to glide down their faces.”

*vṛndaśo vraja-vṛṣā mṛga-gāvo veṇu-vādyā-hṛta-cetasa ārāt danta-daṣṭa-  
kavalā dhṛta-karṇā nidritā likhita-citram ivāsan*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.35.5 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.118

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“Hearing the vibration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s flute, the bulls, cows, and deer of Vṛndāvana approach Him. Unable to swallow the grass which they had taken into their mouths, they stand silently with their ears raised and appear like animals in a painting.”

*pūrṇāḥ pulindya urugāya-padābja-rāgaśrī-kuṅkumena dayitā-stana-  
maṇḍitena tad-darśana-smara-rujas tṛṇa-rūṣitena limpantya ānana-kuceṣu  
jahus tad-ādhim*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.21.17 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.119

“O sakhī, we consider the Pulinda girls who collect grass and wood to be greatly fortunate, because by spreading the kuṅkuma which lies upon the grass on their faces and bodies, the desires which arise in their hearts from seeing that very kuṅkuma are pacified. In reality, that kuṅkuma is from the breasts of Śrīmatī Rādhikā, and at the time of enjoying pastimes with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, it becomes smeared on His lotus feet. Then as They wander in the forest, it falls from His feet onto the grass.”

*yadi dūraṁ gataḥ kṛṣṇo vana-śobha-kṣaṇāya tam ahaṁ pūrvam ahaṁ  
pūrvam iti saṁspṛśya remire*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.12.6 and Bṛhad-bhāg.  
2.7.120

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa would sometimes wander far away to see the splendour of the forest, the cowherd boys would revel in running after Him, saying, “I will be the first to touch Him! I will be the first to touch Him!”

*itthaṁ satāṁ brahma-sukhānubhūtyā dāsyam gatānām para-daivatena  
māyāśritānām nara-dārakeṇa sārdham vijahruḥ kṛta-puṇya-puṣjaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.12.11 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.121

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In this way the greatly fortunate cowherd boys enjoy in various ways with Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is seen as the Brahman effulgence by the jñānīs, as the supremely worshipable Deity by His servants, and as an ordinary boy by people in general. (Or ...māyāśritā can also mean that those who had received His utmost mercy, due to being devoid of the mood of opulence, saw Him merely as the son of Nanda.)

*yat-pāda-parṁśur bahu-janma-kṛcchrato  
dhṛtātmabhir yogibhir apy alābhyaḥ  
sa eva yādṛg viśayaḥ svayaṁ sthitaḥ  
kiṁ varṇyate diṣṭam aho vrajaukasām*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.12.12 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.122

Great yogīs perform severe austerities for many lifetimes, but even when with great difficulty they have completely controlled their minds, they still cannot attain even one particle of the dust of the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How then can I possibly describe the good fortune of the vraja-vāsīs, who daily received His direct darśana?

*kvacit pallava-talpeṣu niyuddha-śrama-karśitaḥ vṛkṣa-mūlāśrayaḥ śete  
gopotsaṅgopabarhaṇaḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.16 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.123

When Śrī Kṛṣṇa would become fatigued from wrestling with the cowherd boys, He would accept the lap of one of His friends as a pillow and lie down beneath a tree on a richly decorated bed of flowers and leaves.

*pāda-saṁvāhanam cakruḥ kecit tasya mahātmanaḥ apare hata-pāpmāno  
vyajanaiḥ samavījayan*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.17 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.124

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At that time, one greatly fortunate sakhā would massage His feet, and another would fan His body with a fan made of leaves.

*anye tad-anurūpāṇi manojṣāni mahātmanaḥ gāyanti sma mahā-rāja sneha-  
klinna-dhiyaḥ śanaiḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.15.18 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.125

My dear Mahārāja, other sakhās would sing attractive songs appropriate for resting-time, and all the cowherd boys hearts would melt in affection for Kṛṣṇa.

*nandaḥ kim akarod brāhmaṇ śreya eva mahodayam yaśodā vā mahā-bhāga  
pāpau yasyāḥ stanam hariḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.8.46 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.126

Śrī Parīkṣit Mahārāja asked, “My dear brāhmaṇa, which supremely auspicious sādhana did Nanda perform, and which austerities did the supremely fortunate Yaśodā undergo to have her breast-milk drunk by Śrī Hari?”

*tato bhaktir bhagavati putrī-bhūte janārdane dam-patyor nitarām āsīd gopa-  
gopīṣu bhārata*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.8.51 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.127

Śrī Śukadeva Gosvāmī replied, “O Bharata, for fulfilling the promise of His dear devotee Brahmā, the destroyer of evil, Svayam Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, appeared as the son of Nanda and Yaśodā. In comparison to all of the other gopas and gopīs, this couple possessed the most love for Him.”

*nandaḥ sva-putram ādāya proṣyāgata udāra-dhīḥ mūrdhny avaghrāya  
paramam mudam lebhe kurūdvaha*

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Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.6.43 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.128

When magnanimous Nanda returned from Mathurā, he took his own son Śrī Kṛṣṇa on his lap and experienced immense pleasure by repeatedly smelling His head.

*sa mātuh svinna-gātrāya visrasta-kavara-srajaḥ dṛṣṭvā pariśramaṁ kṛṣṇaḥ  
kṛpayāsīt sva-bandhane*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.9.18 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.129

When Kṛṣṇa saw Yaśodā labouring so desperately that her whole body was dripping with perspiration and the flower garland which was entwined in her hair braid was falling down, He mercifully allowed Himself to be bound by her.

*nenam viriṣco na bhavo na śrīr apy aṅga-saṁśrayā prasādam lebhire gopī  
yat tat prāpa vimuktidāt*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.9.20 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.130

Neither Brahmā, Śiva, or even Lakṣmīdevī - who eternally resides at Kṛṣṇa's chest in the form of a golden line - have ever received as much mercy as Yaśodā did from He who is the bestower of liberation.

*payamsi yāsām apibat putra-sneha-snutāny alam bhagavān devakī-putraḥ  
kaivalādy-akhilārtha-daḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.6.39 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.131

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the bestower of all the objectives of human pursuit including all varieties of liberation, drank with full satisfaction the milk of all the motherly gopīs and cows who were dripping with milk due to their motherly affection for Him.

*tāsām avirataṁ kṛṣṇe kurvatīnām sutekṣaṇam na punaḥ kalpate rājan  
saṁsāro jṣāna-sambhavaḥ*

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Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.6.40 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.132

O King, those gopīs and cows were always feeling maternal love for Kṛṣṇa, and therefore after leaving their bodies they could have never re-entered the cycle of birth and death, the calamity which is imposed on those who are ignorant.

*gopīnām paramānanda āsīd govinda-darśane kṣaṇam yuga-śatam iva yāsām  
yena vinābhavat*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.19.16 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.133

The vraja-gopīs would experience supreme pleasure upon receiving the darśana of Śrī Govinda, but they would consider one moment of His absence to be like one hundred yugas.

*tan-manaskās tad-ālāpās tad-viceṣṭās tad-ātmikāḥ tad-guṇān eva gāyantyo  
nātmāgārāṇi sasmaruḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.30.43 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.134

Those vraja-gopīs who had fully given their hearts to Śrī Kṛṣṇa would imitate His manner of speaking and His activities. Since they had offered their very souls to Him and always sang His glories, they completely forgot themselves and their family interests.

*gopyas tapaḥ kim acarān yad amuṣya rūpaṁ lāvaṇya-sāraṁ asamordhvam  
ananya-siddham dṛgbhiḥ pibanty anusavābhinaṁ durāpam ekānta-dhāma  
yaśasaḥ śrīya aiśvarasya*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.44.14 and Bṛhad-bhāg. 2.7.135

The ladies of Mathurā said, “Which austerities did the vraja-gopīs perform by which they could always drink through their eyes the nectar of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s

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form - which is the very essence of loveliness, which is unequalled or unsurpassed, which is perfect in itself and always appears new and fresh, which is extremely rare to behold and is always the exclusive shelter of all fame, splendour, and opulence?"

*yā dohane vahanane mathanopalepa-preṅkheṅkhanārbha-ruditokṣaṇa-  
mārjanādaḥ gāyanti cainam anurakta-dhiyo śru-kaṇṭhyo dhanyā vraja-striya  
urukrama-citta-yānāḥ*

Śrīmad-Bhāg. 10.44.15 and Bṛhad-  
bhāg. 2.7.136

"The gopīs are extremely fortunate, because their hearts are always so absorbed in Śrī Kṛṣṇa that while milking cows, churning yoghurt, applying candana and other decorations to their bodies, comforting crying babies, washing their floors, and performing all other household duties, tears of love flow from their eyes as they continuously sing about His purifying fame."